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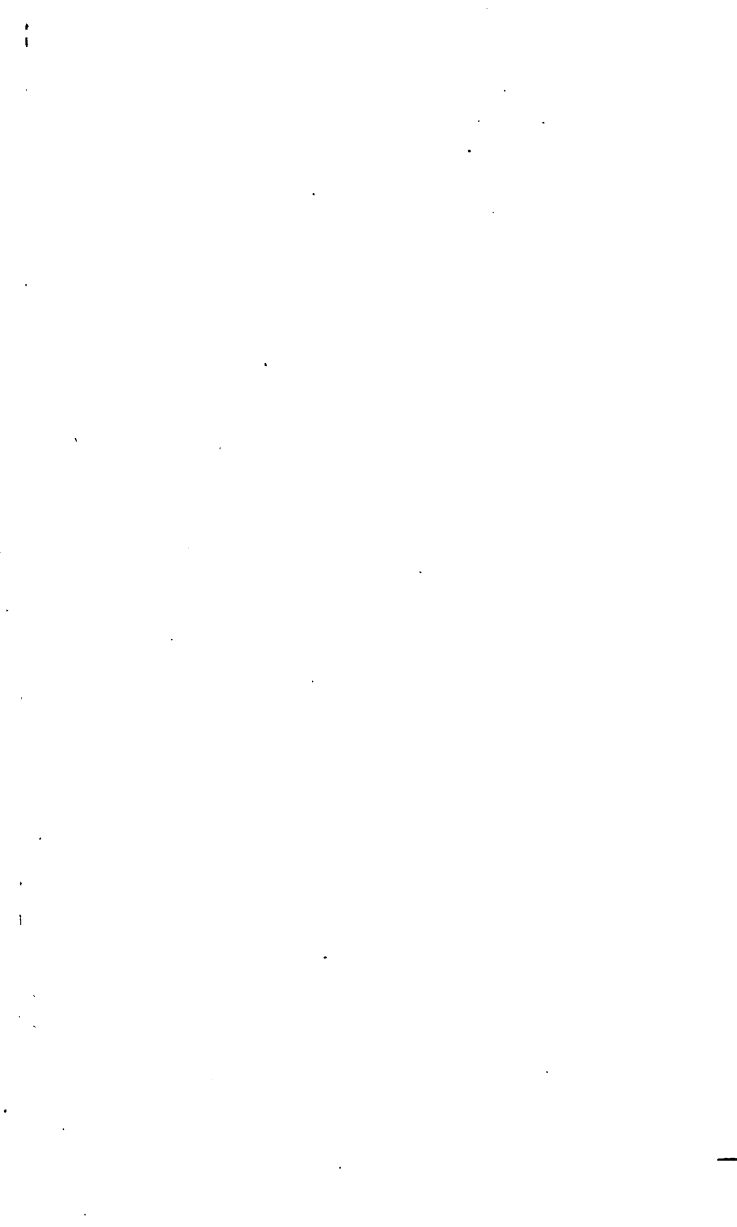
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BRAEMAR

ITS

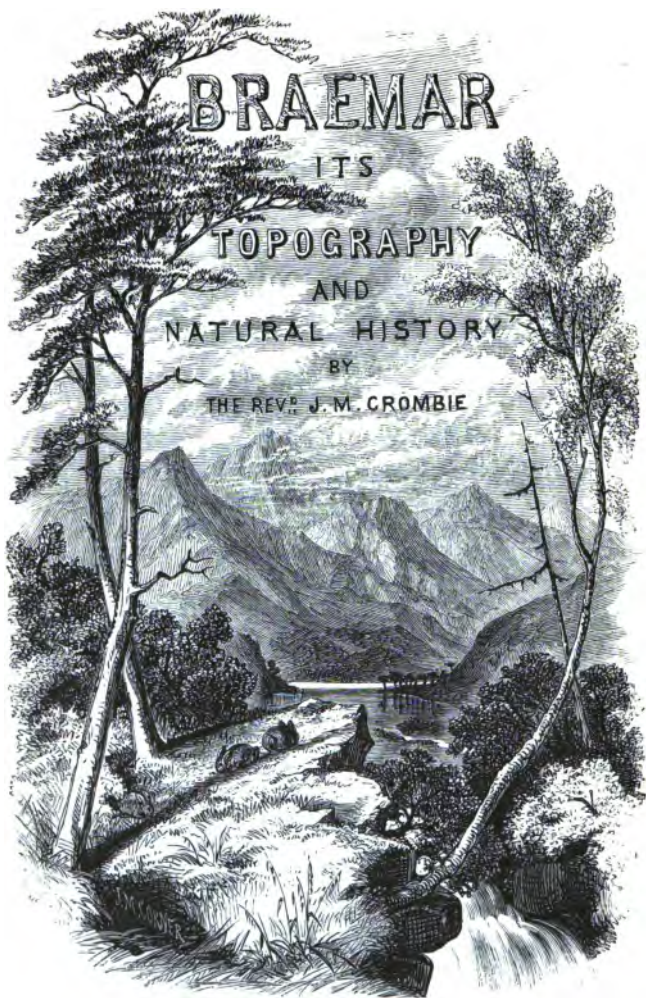
TOPOGRAPHY

AND

NATURAL HISTORY

BY

THE REV. J. M. CROMBIE



B R A E M A R :

ITS

TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

BY THE

REV. JAMES M. CROMBIE, M.A.

MINISTER AT CASTLETON.

ABERDEEN :

JOHN SMITH, 57 UNION STREET.

AND

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS, EDINBURGH.

MDCCCLXI.



TO .

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE COUNTESS OF FIFE,

AND

MRS FARQUHARSON OF INVERCAULD,

THE FOLLOWING DESCRIPTION OF

BRAEMAR

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY THEIR OBLIGED SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.



ROUTES TO BRAEMAR

THERE are two main routes to Castleton, by which tourists from all parts of the country may have daily and easy access thereunto—viz., from Aberdeen, on the east, per railway to Aboyne (30 miles), and thence by coach to Ballater (12 miles); and from Perth, on the south, per railway to Blairgowrie (15 miles), and thence by coach through Glen Shee, Glen Beg, and Glen Cluny (35 miles). There is also a favourite route of tourists from Blair Athol in Perthshire, per pony, through Glen Tilt, Glen Bynnoch, and Glen Dee (30 miles); but after heavy rains it is sometimes impossible to ford the various streams which must be crossed. There are various other tracks across the mountains by which, from the north, west, and south, it may be reached by pedestrians in summer, but the tourist will find it far better in every respect to proceed by the stereotyped routes.

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P R E F A C E.

As Braemar has of late years, especially since the Queen took up her autumn quarters at Balmoral, become a fashionable resort for visitors from all parts of the country, a full and correct account of the natural features and productions of the district is evidently a most desirable object. This becomes the more necessary, as all the information in regard to the subject which they are likely to obtain, is derived solely from the inadequate if not one-sided reports of former visitors, or from the meagre contents of a few pages of the gazetteers. In the following treatise, which, it will be at once perceived, does not partake of the character of an ordinary guide-book, we propose as far as possible to supply what has been long felt and often stated by many to be a desideratum. We have frequently been struck with the idea that guide-books, strictly and properly so called, might with propriety be reduced to one-half their bulk, and partake more of the nature of simple itineraries, giving all necessary

information in regard to localities, distances, roads, and objects of interest, without entering into minute details of scenery, which is incapable of being but generally described, and without long poetical quotations, which, however beautiful and appropriate, the tourist invariably skips over ; or, if they must be of a certain size before they can become a profitable speculation, it would undoubtedly be far better, and would certainly be more appreciated by the intelligent reader, if after this reduction of matter the remaining pages were devoted to a brief account of the natural history of the district. At all events, such is the plan which we propose to adopt in the present treatise ; and if the visitors to Braemar are in general so intelligent and so imbued with a love of nature as I have found some of them to be, the attempt will, on this account at least, assuredly not prove a failure.

The scenery of the district, in its principal features, will be generally described, omitting nothing of interest ; while its natural history, in its different departments, will also be generally considered, noticing any characteristic and particular objects. In neither case, however, shall we enter into minute details ; as, on the one hand, we do not intend writing an elaborate essay on physical scenery, nor, on the other, an extensive treatise on natural history. All we purpose is to give such a view of both as will be most acceptable to the general reader, who at the present day, it is presumed, has an equal

taste for either, and able from what we shall state to infer what we omit, and from the outline we shall give to fill in the details for himself. And in order that it may possess something of the nature of an itinerary for the sake of the mere passing tourist, we shall take a series of excursions from Castleton to the localities most worthy of a visit, giving full directions for reaching them, and pointing out every object of interest that comes in the way. At first it was intended to illustrate the text with a series of drawings of the most noted objects and finest views. On second thoughts, however, and for various reasons—chiefly that, after all, these give but little idea of their real nature—this plan was abandoned. It is all the less necessary because photographs and stereoscopic views of the different *lions* of Braemar may easily be obtained on the spot. A map of the district, for general reference, has been prefixed, and it is hoped will prove both useful and correct. I have been indebted to several parties in the locality for information of various kinds, particularly to William Brown, Esq., factor for Invercauld ; but in every case have been guided solely by what I myself have seen and known. This remark equally applies to the information derived from Dr MacGillivray's posthumous work, *The Natural History of Deeside*, published for private circulation at the command of the Queen, which I have read with the attention which it so well deserves for its accurate observations and

beautiful descriptions, and with veneration for the memory of him who was my first instructor in natural science, and whose great aim ever was to teach all who came in contact with him "to look from nature up to nature's God."

CASTLETON OF BRAEMAR,
June 1861.

PART I.

TOPOGRAPHY OF BRAEMAR.



B R A E M A R.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL SCENERY AND VILLAGES.

SECTION I.—GENERAL SCENERY.

BRAEMAR is situated in the south-west of Aberdeenshire, and formerly comprehended a much larger district than the parish to which the name is now exclusively applied. It will be most convenient for our present purpose still to employ the term in its ancient acceptation, as denoting the parishes of Braemar proper, Crathie, and Glenmuick, as far as Ballater. At this village, the Highlands, properly speaking, terminate in the long extended moor of Dinnet, and the intermediate upland tracts, half Alpine and half Lowland, commence. The district thus marked out is about 18 miles long by 30 broad, measured in a straight line, and is well defined alike in respect of its natural boundaries, its general appearance, and the character of its native population. It is separated from the neighbouring counties, and from the lower districts of Aberdeenshire, by an unbroken chain of lofty mountains, and everywhere throughout is essentially a Highland region, containing some of the highest peaks in the Grampian range.

Its scenery, as might thus be expected, partakes more of the stern and sublime than of the tame and beautiful, even when the mellowed light of the autumn sun shines brightly down upon it. Inaccessible cliffs, often with but slight traces of any form of vegetation, and fit haunts for the eagle and raven—foaming torrents dashing in fury over granitic boulders, and falling into deep boiling caldrons—sombre forests of lofty pine-trees, through which the red-deer bounds, and in whose dusky recesses the wild-cat finds its retreat—mountain lochs, margined not by trees and shrubs, but by black precipitous rocks—bleak moorlands, with scanty and stunted herbage, amidst which but a very few flowerets bloom—are the general characteristic features of the district. But this wilder and more rugged aspect of nature is here and there relieved and softened down by many a green nook on the side of the mountain streams, clothed with the brightest flowers and the freshest mosses—by pleasant woods of fragrant birch, dotted with the white and pink blossoms of luxuriant wild-roses, or with clusters of the red berries of the mountain ash—by fruitful fields of bear and oats along the valley of the Dee, producing food for man and beast—by romantic villages and noble mansions snugly nestled in the bosoms, or peeping round the corners, of verdant hills. But at no season of the year does it appear in greater magnificence than in a clear frosty day in winter. When the mountains are robed in their snowy shroud, and their asperities concealed beneath its soft ample folds—when the uniform whiteness is sufficiently relieved by the dark masses of the evergreen pines, from becoming either fatiguing or injurious to the eye—when river, and stream, and loch are imprisoned, with diminished waters, beneath a thick covering of ice, and are scarcely to be recognised from the firm ground by the stranger—when the sun shines forth brightly with a mock sun not unfrequently by its side, and the snow crystals sparkle like gems beneath its

light—when in the early evening the heavens have all the bright tints of an Italian sky; and were it not for the piercing cold, we might easily fancy ourselves in the sunny south—when at night the aurora borealis lights up with its flitting streamers of white and red the northern skies—when the pale cold moon with her countless starry train moves slowly onwards through the clear heavens, without a cloud to dim its lustre,—then the scenery of Braemar is peculiarly grand and characteristic, whether we look above, beneath, or around us. Accordingly, it presents many attractions to the lover of the picturesque, alike when arrayed in its wintry shroud and its russet autumn robes; and none can gaze on its Highland glories without their thoughts being irresistibly led upward to Him who weigheth “the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance;” whose Name is written on the tiniest moss, as well as on the giant tree; and whose Voice is heard in the gentle stream, as well as in the roaring cataract.

But not to forestall thus vaguely what we shall afterwards have to say more definitely upon this subject, we proceed to show, by particular descriptions, the correctness of these general observations upon the scenery of Braemar. It is generally, and very correctly said, that there are three primary objects which form the romantic beauty of a district, and which must necessarily enter into the composition of every picturesque landscape: These are hill, water, and wood; and where one of them is absent, the scenery is incomplete, and loses much of its charms. We have abundance of all the three in Braemar, very much in keeping with one another, and, as might be expected, upon a large scale. In fact, we can boast of having the highest hills, the purest water, and the finest pine forest in Britain. Of course, in this enumeration of the different elements of romantic scenery, the presence of the habitations of mankind, either congregated or scattered, is taken for granted. Without

this, the finest landscape would lose its greatest charm—the grandest scenery would, after all, be but a sublime desert—the temple of nature itself would feel still and lonely to the worshippers, were it not that its high-priests abode therein, offering up at morning and at evening the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and chanting unceasing litanies to nature's God. The sounds, the signs, and abodes of intelligent life, are absolutely necessary for the full appreciation and enjoyment of inanimate nature ; and had we to make a lengthened sojourn even amongst the most picturesque scenery where these were wanting, we would, unless we were misanthropes altogether, be ever and anon wishing ourselves back in the smoky city, inhaling its impure air, and treading its dirty streets. And besides these primary elements either expressed or understood, there are certain secondary ones, such as glens, lochs, and moors, which, in particular situations, are inseparable from and serve to render the former complete, and which we conceive are essential to the scenery of every genuine Highland region. As these latter also, in all their various forms, are by no means strangers to Braemar, it accordingly presents a landscape complete and harmonious alike in its principal features and minor details : and just in proportion to the magnitude of these, grand and romantic. We now proceed to describe these different elements in detail.

SECTION II.—VILLAGES.

Although the dwelling-places of men form but an artificial element in the landscape, whatever may be their extent, yet, as being the best known points in the topography of a district, we shall with them commence our description. This may not indeed be the natural order, but at all events it will be the most convenient method of proceeding. There is no individual collection

of houses in Braemar worthy of the name of a town, and only two which can with propriety be termed villages, although there are several hamlets of various sizes scattered up and down the district. These villages are Ballater, at the entrance into, and Castleton, the capital of the Aberdeenshire Highlands. Of these in their order, noticing briefly their situation, history, and objects of interest.

I. *Ballater*, the first village we enter when we fairly reach the Aberdeenshire Highlands, is beautifully situated on the north bank of the Dee, in an open level plain of considerable extent, at an elevation of 800 feet above the level of the sea. Lying in the hollow between the finely wooded hills of Panannich and Craigandarroch, its appearance is certainly very picturesque, though from a distance it seems little more than an accumulation of boulders, which have rolled down from the mountains. It is 42 miles distant from Aberdeen, and 18 from Castleton of Braemar, with both of which it has daily and easy communication. The village is of no great antiquity, being scarcely more than a century old, and took its origin from the want of accommodation at Panannich for the numerous visitors which then frequented the wells. The more ancient hamlet in the neighbourhood was Tullich, 2 miles to the east, with several houses and the walls of the old kirk still standing—giving its name to the famous Scotch reel which, as the legend relates, was improvised in the church one cold winter's day in the absence of the parson, who was storm-staid. Ballater is now a pretty considerable village, with a population of about 300, and containing many excellent houses, which during the summer and autumn afford comfortable lodgings to the numerous visitors who here take up their residence. It has a capital inn, the Invercauld Arms, with ample accommodation for passing tourists, who on their way to or from Braemar, frequently spend a day to enjoy the surrounding scenery, and visit

the sights in the neighbourhood. The streets, if such they may be called, branch off at right angles from the main-road, and contain nothing of interest except the parish church, with a tower and clock, situated near the centre of the village, with sittings for about 700, and well attended at all seasons. A post-office, a branch of the Union Bank of Scotland, and several shops, in which groceries and provisions of all kinds, as well as various other articles, may be obtained, are great conveniences both for the inhabitants and for strangers. There is also a masonic lodge in Ballater, called St Nathalan's, after the patron saint of Braemar, who resided at Tullich; an earnest pious man, of whom several wonderful tales are told in the legendary lore of the district. Originally called into existence for the convenience of strangers, the village still subsists to a considerable extent by ministering to their wants, though the inhabitants, being mostly engaged in trade and business of various kinds, are not absolutely dependent upon them. Here the Saxon element predominates amongst the population so much as almost to supersede the Celtic; and the tourist, as he mixes with the people, who are far more refined and intelligent than their mongrel brethren farther up the country, would have some difficulty in fancying himself in a Highland village.

The air is very salubrious and pure; the climate equable and temperate; and as it is pretty free from mountain mists and rains, which are more frequent and violent farther up, it has often proved very beneficial to those suffering from pulmonary complaints. Hence it is much more frequented than Castleton by invalids, who have also the advantage of drinking the celebrated waters of *Panannich*, which the old inhabitants were wont to consider as a sovereign panacea for all the diseases which flesh is heir to, especially when accompanied or followed by a drop of genuine mountain-dew. The wells, which are situated on the face of the hill about $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile south-

east of Ballater, are four in number, all chalybeate, not disagreeable to the taste, stimulant and tonic, and said to be very useful in scrofulous and allied complaints. They all contain carbonate of iron and lime, with small quantities of other mineral ingredients, which, however, are found in different proportions in the different wells, each of which is locally celebrated for curing its own disease. Comfortable lodgings for invalids, with hot, cold, and shower baths, may be obtained at the wells ; and there can be no doubt but that the properties of the water and the change of air combined, have often done the patient a great deal of temporary good, if they have not entirely removed his complaint.

On the same side, but farther down the river, near the north-east extremity of the cliffs, is the farmhouse of *Ballatrich*, in which Lord Byron lived when a boy, and from which, during his holidays at the grammar-school of Aberdeen, he made his excursions to Morven of Snow, the rocks that o'ershadow Culbleen, and the steep frowning glories of dark Lochnagar, and where he breasted the billows of Dee's rushing tide, and dreamt and sang of his golden-haired Mary. At the foot of Craigandarroch is *Monaltrie*, formerly Ballater House, belonging to the Farquharsons of Invercauld, finely situated at the extremity of an extensive lawn, with a large fir-wood behind, and with a very productive fruit-garden attached. It is a mansion of considerable extent, and though presenting nothing very interesting in an architectural point of view, yet looks remarkably well from the public road. About a mile south-west from Ballater was *Braichley Castle*, of which a few fragments are all the existing vestiges, celebrated for the slaughter of its laird by the contrivance, if not at the instigation, of his wife, by one of the Farquharsons of Inverey ; a deed commemorated in the fine well-known ballad of the "Barrone of Braichley," whom the Gordons mourned from the head of the Dee to the banks of the Spey. On the south face of the hill

of Knock are the remains of *Knock Castle*, which appears to have been of considerable strength and extent ; and about 2 miles up the Muic is the mansion of *Birkhall*, a fine old house, purchased by Prince Albert from the family of Abergeldie, and now forming one of the royal residences, nicely situated on the sloping banks of the stream, which are here of considerable height, and surrounded with woods of fir and birch, in a quiet retired spot, far from the bustle of courts and the noise of the world.

II. *Castleton*, the capital, such as it is, of the Deeside Highlands, is situated in lat. 57° N., long. $3^{\circ} 24'$ W., at an elevation of 1180 feet above the level of the sea. It lies on the southern and higher side of a narrow plain, which on all quarters is entirely surrounded by high, well-wooded, and romantic hills, in the sheltering bosom of two of which, Craig Coinnoch and Morrone, the village quietly rests even when the tempest is fiercely raging amongst the hills and laying the forests bare. From its situation in the most elevated part of Scotland, and from its proximity to the lofty mountains, it is under the disadvantage of being subject to frequent and heavy rains, so that it is often very wet here when perfectly dry at Ballater. The air, however, is remarkably pure, and the climate exceedingly healthy, even in winter when the cold mists are hanging about the hills, and the frost is often most intense, as is evident from the fact that the inhabitants are long-lived and free from all the diseases of cities and low-lying districts. The water of Cluny divides it into two portions—viz. *Castleton* properly so called on the east, and *Auchindryne* on the west; the former upon the Invercauld and the latter on the Fife estates. In general, the houses are rather very commonplace affairs, comfortable enough for the inhabitants, but presenting very little accommodation for strangers. One cannot but wonder how, during the season when the village is crowded and

overcrowded with tourists, a family of four or six—ladies and gentlemen—can manage to sit down and dine in the scanty room which is at their disposal, and still more how they can contrive to stow themselves away when bed-time comes. Somehow or other they overcome such difficulties, and seem rather to like them than otherwise. But while this is the general character of the houses, there are one or two of a better class, and with more ample accommodation, while there are many others inhabited by the poorer class, which appear to the Saxon as little better than mere huts. There are, however, two very fine inns of a superior class, both of which have recently been very much improved and enlarged. These are the Fife Arms Inn and the Invercauld Arms Inn, both mine hosts of which are well known for their anxiety to do everything in their power to render tourists comfortable, at very reasonable charges, considering the scarcity and high price of provisions in the neighbourhood. And still better is it supplied with churches, there being no less than three to the scanty parish population of 750 souls. The Established church, a small though very neat building, with a spire, is situated at the eastern entrance into the village amidst a fine shrubbery; the Free church, a still smaller building, on the Cluny side, plain enough looking on the outside, but with a very commodious manse attached; the Roman Catholic chapel, erected by the munificence of the Duchess of Leeds, is a larger and more handsome structure, on a fine site, at the western end of the village. The population of Castleton amounts to about 200, who are partly of Highland and partly of Lowland extraction—most of them speaking Gaelic, but, with few exceptions, understanding the English equally well—possessing many of the Celtic virtues and a proportionate share of the Saxon vices. They are in general a pretty moral and temperate people, though the social evil is rather prevalent, and the mountain-dew

rather freely tasted—hospitable and obliging one to another, except when under the influence of sectarian zeal—courteous to strangers, though generally expecting a consideration for any kindness shown. Many of them find stated employment in the service of Fife and Invercauld; others earn their livelihood by their various trades, and four of us contrive to exist by our professions; while a large number of old and infirm females are supported partly by the parochial board, and partly by the Countess of Fife and Mrs Farquharson, whose hands are ever as ready to relieve the needy as their ears are open to the tale of want.

The village, though from its remote situation occupying no great place in the historical annals of our country, is yet of considerable antiquity, and, under the name of *Kindrochit*, was for long the abode of royalty and nobility in the days of yore; while the vast Caledonian forest, in whose heart it lay, stood in all its pristine glory. Here Kenneth the Second had a hunting-seat, no trace of which now remains, and merrily during the season, with thane and warrior and huntsman, studied the science, and followed the art, of venerie. Here also Malcolm Canmore, with his queen and courtiers, loved to dwell in the Castle of *Bridge-end*, which he built, the ruined walls of which may still be seen standing, attesting its massive strength and its great extent. In after times the powerful Earls of Mar were its lords superior, and many a gallant train of fair ladies and brave men issued in the morning from the old castle of Braemar to hunt the deer; and many a night of wassailry and mirth and song was spent therein by Highland and Lowland noble; and many a bright eye sparkled, and many a tender bosom heaved, at the minstrel's tale of chivalry and romance. But from the time that John the thirty-ninth Earl made his rash and ill-fated effort to restore the Chevalier de St George, and "the standard on the Braes o' Mar was up and

streaming rarely" amidst an eager rejoicing throng of chiefs and vassals, the village has lost much of its ancient character, and its only gala day is at the annual gathering, when it is honoured by the presence of our gracious sovereign Queen Victoria.

So much, then, for the two villages of Braemar, in many respects the antipodes of each other—the first, though artificial and less interesting, feature of its scenery requiring to be described as a landmark to the more attractive natural features, the handiworks of the Great Architect of the universe Himself, whose power, and glory, and wisdom, are therein clearly revealed.

CHAPTER II.

MOUNTAINS AND GLENS.

SECTION I.—MOUNTAINS.

THE chief characteristic feature which Braemar presents, and that from which all the others take their tone and colouring, is its *mountains*. Looking down upon them from any of the higher central peaks, they appear to rise as it were from one common root, and to spread therefrom in a series of various ramifications, but in an unbroken mass, over the whole district. But when we make a closer inspection from below, and traverse the intervening valleys which are scarcely visible from their summits, we find that we can discover four great groups separated geographically from each other by glens sufficiently wide to interrupt the series and render them distinct. These may most easily be classified and described as the Cairngorm and Glengairn ranges on the north—the Lochnagar and Glen Ey ranges on the south. Of these, briefly in their order, marking the relative position and altitudes of the principal mountains—the latter definitely stated when ascertained from the Ordnance Survey, and qualified by the term about, when derived from other sources.

1st, The *Cairngorm* range. The mountains constituting this group occupy the most elevated ground, and form the highest cluster in Great Britain. Commencing on the

east with *Craigandal*, whose base is elevated some 1200 feet above the level of the sea, they stretch along the N. bank of the Dee in an uninterrupted series, covering a space of about 14 miles in breadth by 8 in length. Amongst them is the celebrated *Ben Macdhui* in the N.W. 4296 feet, which for many years disputed with Ben Nevis, now correctly ascertained to be 4406 feet, the pre-eminence in height; *Braeriach*, 4225 feet, a short distance to the westward,—the northern termination of a ridge, having its next highest peak in *Cairntoul*, to the southward, about 4220 feet—and forming a very distinct boundary between the counties of Aberdeen and Inverness; *Cairngorm*, 4090 feet, on the borders of Banffshire, whose summit is about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles N. from that of Ben Macdhui, famous for its rock crystals; *Benna-boord*, 3851 feet, connected with the preceding mountains by means of numerous ridges of various elevations, covering a large area of ground, with two summits about $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile apart; *Ben Aun*, 3826 feet, stretching in a N.E. direction from the former, and having on the S. the great and little *Craigandal*, from which it is separated by an elevated moorland ridge.

2d, The *Glengairn* range. The mountains forming this group are of considerably less elevation than those of the preceding, and are not in such close proximity to one another. Commencing on the west with *Oulardach*, about 2800 feet, 4 miles N.E. of Craigandal, they run in an easterly direction for 13 miles to Ballater, where the Highlands, strictly speaking, geographically terminate. The series, though not higher, is more mountainous in the N. than in any other direction, and there proceeds on a line with Ben Aun, having its more remarkable peaks in the *Brown-Cow* and *Scraulac*, the latter about 2700 feet, and forming a well-defined boundary betwixt Braemar and the parish of Strathdon. In the N.E. is *Morven*, about 2900 feet, on the borders of Cromar—the highest mountain in the group, visible at a considerable distance

from the Lowlands, flanked by a lower ridge of hills named *Culbleen*, mentioned by Byron, and which stretch down to the valley of the Dee, and terminate in *Craig-andarroch*, about 1400 feet. The range in the interior and the S. consists of elevated ridges, more or less disjoined from each other by narrow upland moors, and scarcely anywhere rising to the dignity of mountains in a district where peaks of 2000 feet or less in height can only with propriety be termed hills.

3d, The *Lochnagar* range. The mountains constituting this group are next in height and interest to those of the Cairngorm range, and are all so closely connected together as to seem little more than different peaks of one and the same mountain. Commencing on the east with a low range of hills—the *Panannich* and *Acholzie Crags*, lying S. of Ballater—they extend 15 miles westward to Glen Cluny, and occupy from N. to S. the whole tract from the valley of the Dee to the borders of Forfarshire. The highest summit in the range is the classic *Lochnagar*, 3789 feet—the most elevated S. of the Dee, long and broad, precipitous in its eastern face, sending off continuous ridges in various directions, especially towards the N.W. A short distance south is the *Cairn of Corbreach*, about 3400 feet, and immediately to the W. *Cairn Taggart*, about 3560 feet, each separated from Lochnagar only by narrow ravines. From this the ridge is prolonged in a S.W. direction through Cairn Bannock, Tulman, Cairn-a-claishe, peaks averaging about 2400 feet more or less, and which, from their position, are scarcely visible from the glens, to the *Glasméal*, 3502 feet—a broad hill on the borders of Forfar. It thence proceeds almost due north, till it meets the northern ridge of Lochnagar at *Craig Coinnoch*, a rocky prominence, 1390 feet, near the village of Castleton.

4th, The *Glen Ey* range. This consists of a series of ridges occupying a similar area, but generally of less elevation than most of those in the last-noticed group.

Commencing with *Cairn Eelar*, about 3340 feet, on the borders of Perth and Inverness, its southern ridge runs in an easterly direction, and with no interruption to the Cairnwall, 3116 feet, finding its greatest elevations in *Scarsach*, *Gelly Hill*, *Ben-Uarn More*, *Cairn Yoie*, with an average height of 3400 feet. Its eastern ridge extends from the Cairnwall, alongside of which runs the road to Glenshee, almost due north to *Morrone*, 2790 feet, in the neighbourhood of Castleton, which may be considered as forming a part also of the N. ridge along the valley of the Dee, possessing no hills of any great elevation, and, with the exception of the *Raven's Crag*, of no great beauty, which is the case also with those of its western ridge, down to Cairn Eelar. The mountains in the interior bear a very great resemblance to each other throughout, being broad and rounded, generally crowded, and running into each other; and while of rather more than moderate height, yet nowhere exceeding, and seldom reaching, 3000 feet.

Such, then, is the geographical distribution of the various mountain ranges of Braemar. The different elevations assigned them, though not in every individual case strictly accurate, may be depended upon as the closest approximation to reality that can be given. Besides the different mountains which we have mentioned, there are several others in all the groups of but slightly inferior elevation. These, however, we need not at present particularise, as their height must be judged of by the eye, in comparison with their neighbours, and as we shall again meet with some of them in our various excursions. Enough have been enumerated to give you some general idea of this mountain land, and to prove that there is no other district in our island, of similar extent, which can boast of such an array of giant hills. And what matters it though Ben Macdhuì has been trigonometrically decapitated, and no longer rears his head as the monarch of British mountains, when the still more

famed and classic Lochnagar remains to attract the feet and test the lungs of tourists, to the latest generations.

SECTION II.—GLENS.

Glens can scarcely be said to form a distinct element in Highland scenery, since they are always present and inseparably connected with mountains and streama. In a district like Braemar, where the mountains are so crowded and connected together, and form an almost unbroken chain around it, the glens, though sometimes of considerable depth, are, as might be expected, of but moderate length and breadth. And though sufficient to render the different ranges in a manner distinct, they are in general so narrow as to be quite invisible from the higher peaks, and when visible, presenting the appearance of mere clefts or ravines. They generally commence with a hollow of a circular form, in the mountains, called a *Corry*, and in their upper part are very steep and narrow, becoming more level and open towards their mouth, where the hills are lower and farther apart. Their direction is the same as that of the streams which run through them—sometimes contracting and sometimes expanding, as the mountains encroach upon or recede from them, so as not to preserve a regular increasing ratio of width from their heads. Like other glens in similar districts, there is a central and larger one from which the rest diverge, like the main branches of a tree from its stem; and from these in their turn other still smaller glens, resembling branchlets and twigs, proceed and ramify amongst the hills.

Only one of the glens of Braemar is of sufficient width to be called a valley, namely, that of the Dee, or, as it is locally termed, *Strathdee*. The valley of the Dee is extremely picturesque throughout, and presents a considerable diversity of scenery. It is consequently very

much and very deservedly admired by every tourist. Not only does it relieve the sublime monotony of the neighbouring mountains by its gentler varied beauty, but it is in it also that we meet with the most numerous congregated habitations, as well as with the finest individual dwelling-places of mankind. The scenery of the lower part of Strathdee, from Ballater to Crathie, though not the most romantic, is nevertheless very beautiful, bounded as it is by hills of various heights, and dotted with woods of pine and birch; and it is really a fine sight, as we pass up it, to watch how mountain after mountain opens upon our view, and to notice how they slope down in long successive wavy lines towards the river. But it is the upper portion of the valley, extending onwards to the Linn of Dee, with its noble forests, precipitous crags, and glimpses of the nearing lofty mountains, which most forcibly attracts our attention. More especially for four miles of the tract between Crathie and Castleton, where the valley is more contracted and tortuous, does it present a landscape of almost unrivalled magnificence, worthy of standing side by side even with the renowned pass of the Trosachs; and certainly no higher character than this could be given. Strathdee, though generally narrow, and not very productive in an agricultural point of view, yet occasionally expands into comparatively wide plains, which are laid out in fields of turnips, grass, and oats, as in the neighbourhood of Castleton, Crathie, and Ballater, where it attains its maximum width and fertility. As the banks of the river itself are for the most part low, seldom rising to any considerable height, we cannot expect to find the centre of the valley characterised by high, verdant, and wooded slopes. This, however, is amply compensated for by the mountain ridges which bound it being covered with trees and shrubs, and from their close proximity unto, appearing at a distance as if they really constituted, the banks of the

river. The valley is everywhere pretty distinctly defined, having on both sides a continuous and unbroken series of hills, differing in contour, structure, elevation, as well as in the nature and profusion of their vegetation.

From Strathdee, on both sides, various other smaller glens diverge. A brief description of the more important of these, which our excursions will not embrace, may serve to give some idea of their natural features and scenery. *Glen Muic* branches off to the south-west from the valley of the Dee at Ballater, and contains the finest and most diversified scenery of all the glens in Braemar. It commences in the corry of the Dhuloch, betwixt Cairn Taggart and Lochnagar; and in its upper portion, where the mountains are entirely of granite, it is narrow, elevated, rugged, and bare, which character it maintains to the foot of Loch Muic, after which it becomes more open and level, with good pasture. In this latter portion there are the ruins of many old houses; but all that now exist are one or two gamekeepers' shielings and shepherds' huts, along with Altguisach Cottage, a shooting-lodge of Prince Albert. At the Linn, about nine miles from its head, it again contracts, but immediately afterwards expands to a considerable distance, until it reaches its maximum width between the hill of Knock and the ridge of Panannich, where it joins Strathdee. Everywhere throughout this lower half it is well wooded with birch and fir, with frequent farmhouses, and a considerable quantity of cultivated land, so that, in one or two spots, especially around Birkhall, one of the royal residences, it presents a very marked contrast to the rest of the glens of Braemar. This difference is perhaps more clearly seen when we gaze upon the serpentine hills of Coial, which are clothed with grass to the very summit, instead of the universal covering of heather, which all the other mountains in the district wear.

Glen Gairn, the largest of those on the N. side of the

Dee, branches off nearly opposite to Glen Muic, and stretches first N., then W., and afterwards S.W. for about eighteen miles. It commences in a deep hollow, between Ben Aun and Craigandal, and in its upper portion is barren, bare, and bleak, with high hills on both sides, covered with heath and occasional patches of grass, and containing only one human habitation—a shepherd's bothy. Where it begins to incline more to the W.—in which direction it stretches for the greater part of its extent—it opens out a little; and, though the ridges are still heathy, it has very good pasturage in the bottom, along the stream, while in the neighbourhood of Corandavon Lodge, a large and handsome shooting-box for the deer forest of Ben Aun, the first traces of cultivation make their appearance. From this, all the way on to its mouth, it preserves a pretty uniform character, with nearly the same equal ratio of width, though sometimes contracting and at other times expanding, as the hills encroach or recede; with the moor still stretching far and wide in all directions, though here and there broken in upon considerably by grassy pastures and cultivated fields; with the farmhouses becoming more and more frequent, and occasionally of a better class, though they are not very numerous nor possessed of much accommodation throughout the whole glen. In so far as its scenery is concerned, it is very commonplace, being neither beautiful nor grand, and presenting no attractions whatever to the lover of the picturesque, owing chiefly to the want of wood, of which, except in one or two places, where there are clumps of birch or small fir plantations, there is a great scarcity; though, were it planted with indigenous trees, it would bear a very different aspect, and might be made a pretty looking glen. We pass over the glens of Girnac and Gelder on the S., and those of Aberarder and Candlic on the N., as being of no great extent, and presenting no very interesting features requiring description.

Glen Clunie commences at the foot of the Cairnwall, on the borders of Perthshire, and runs in a westerly direction for five miles, having its upper portion elevated and narrow, with no traces of human habitations on its cold, bleak moorlands. It afterwards somewhat expands, where it is joined by Glen Baddoch from the S.W., and then runs almost due N. for the rest of its course, presenting an uniform width till it is joined by the larger glen of Callater on the east, after which it opens out a little more, though it is nowhere of great width except towards its mouth, where it meets Strathdee between the hills of Morrone and Craig Coinnoch at Castleton. There are no very peculiar characteristics connected with its scenery, and but little to strike the eye or require description. On both sides it is bounded by mountains of moderate elevation, covered with heath and green patches of grass interspersed, with not a tree to be seen except towards its mouth. It is essentially a pastoral glen, supporting in summer and autumn considerable flocks of sheep, and contains a little arable land in the immediate neighbourhood of the small farm-houses. Were it planted here and there with birch or pine, not only would its appearance be very much improved, but it would also be more sheltered from the cold winds by which it is often swept. The road to Spittal of Glenshee and Blairgowrie runs through it, which, in the season, enlivens it very much, from the passage of numerous vehicles and pedestrians from the South, to which it is the nearest and most direct route.

Of Glen Ey on the S., and glens Quoich and Lui on the N., all at one time under pasture, we at present give no description, as we shall visit them in our excursions. Accordingly we go on to *Glen Dee*, which is the name given to the upper portion of the strath. It commences in the hollow between the flanks of Braeriach, Cairngorm, and Ben Macdhui, and runs in a S.W. direction to the Linn. Down even to its junction with the Geaully,

it is little better than a mere deep ravine, bounded on both sides by very lofty and rugged mountains, from the summit of which it is almost invisible, appearing only as a cleft through their closely connected masses. On the left, two smaller glens diverge—those of the Garachory and Giusachan, very similar to each other, wild, narrow, elevated, rugged, and containing numerous moraines of all shapes and sizes. Glen Dee, in this part, is a perfect wilderness of mountain piled upon mountain, a chaos of huge precipices and deep corries and bleached boulders—presenting a sublime picture of solitary grandeur, uninhabited and uninhabitable by man. It is relieved from a drear monotony only by the varied appearance of the granitic ridges, and the glistening of the snow in their crevasses. The lower portion, from the Geaully on to the Linn, though locally termed Glen Dee, is geographically to be considered as the upper portion of the strath properly so called. It forms a very marked contrast to the former, being not only wider, less elevated, and bounded by lower ridges, but also entirely pastoral, affording capital grazing for sheep, capable of cultivation, and, judging from the many remains of houses everywhere scattered throughout it, must have contained a goodly population in the days of yore, when strong arms were ever in demand for aggression or defence, in raid or battle.

Glen Geaully, which is on the same line with the lower part of Glen Dee, commences at Scarsach, and runs first N., and then due E., to the junction. It is low, and of little width throughout, consisting entirely of bare, bleak moorlands, where the heather is varied only by deep bogs, yielding marshes, and tracts of peat. We can scarcely conceive a more desolate and forbidding aspect than what it presents; and, should we see it in a dull day, when the heavy, leaden clouds are spread like a gloomy pall over its gloomy scenery, we may depend upon it that the recollection will haunt us for long, and

as often as it comes across the brain, inspire us with uneasy feelings. For a short distance, however, towards its mouth, it becomes grassy, and contains good pasturage. With the single exception of a shepherd's shieling in this portion, it bears no traces of having ever been inhabited, though the occasional stems of trees—by the side of the stream, as well as on the surface of the mosses—show that it must once have been at least partially wooded. At its mouth it is joined by the smaller but much prettier and pastoral glen of Bynnoch, through which runs the road to Glen Tilt and Blair-Atholl.

So much then for the general scenery of the principal glens of Braemar. Many changes in this respect have passed over them during the last century; and though they still retain their old place in the landscape, yet they are shorn of many of their former features. Many a fire that then smoked has been quenched—many a clump of trees wherewith they then were studded has been felled—the grass has become less green, and the heather more abundant—ruined walls and mole-hillocks alone point out where cultivated fields or gardens then were, while herds of deer now roam in freedom where flocks of sheep then fed. Some of these changes it may be are for the better, but we trust that the next one which takes place will be the restoration—both for appearance and for comfort—at least of some small portion of the wood of which they have injudiciously been deprived.

CHAPTER III.

STREAMS AND LOCHS.

SECTION I.—STREAMS.

IF Braemar is thus, as we have seen, well supplied with hills, so also is it with water, and next to the frequency of its mountains, it is characterised by the frequency of its streams. From every hill, whatever may be its geological formation, there flow innumerable rills, some of which, being merely mountain torrents, are either partially or wholly dried up during the summer, while others give rise to streams of considerable size and bulk all the year round. The water of the granitic rocks is remarkably clear and limpid—in taste and coldness surpassed by none in Scotland ; that of the slaty rocks is inferior in quality, being more or less mixed up with mud and gravel. Still, both are vastly superior to that of other formations ; and the tourist can never have the least difficulty either in slaking his thirst or washing his perspiring brow and weary feet in the coolest water, alike on hill or in glen. One cannot look upon the sparkling water, so free of filth and insects, welling up from perennial springs, or bursting forth from eternal snows far up on the mountain summits, without thinking how thankful would be the myriad drinkers of the Thames's polluted mud for a draught of these pellucid streams. Surely it ought to be a source of the deepest gratitude to

Providence that we, the dwellers in this mountain region, though deprived of many of the artificial liquors of the city, have such an abundance of one which excels them all, and which we would only fully appreciate if once it had been lost—namely, water, pure and sweet as that which gushed from the primeval hills and watered the garden of Paradise.

The only stream in the district worthy of the name of a river is the Dee, which, though it may be surpassed in length and depth by others in Scotland, has no superior in the clearness of its waters, the uniform celerity of its current, and the beautiful scenery of its banks. It is generally considered as having its origin near the summit of Braeriach, at the north-west extremity, in five springs of water, two of which, at least, are always perennial. The rills from these springs unite together a little lower down the mountain, at an elevation of about 4000 feet, and about three miles to the southward are joined by a large stream from the west, called the *Garrachory*, having its origin in a small lake at the north of Cairntoul, and in reality the principal source of the Dee. At the same distance farther to the south, they receive the *Giusachan*, also from Cairntoul. From this point the three united streams pursue the same direction, over rocks and boulders, amidst stones and detritus, between blocks and precipices, for nearly six miles, when they receive the Geaully, a stream of equal size, from the west, after a fall of 2600 feet from their source in Braeriach. From the union of these streams, the Dee, now more worthy of the name, flows due east to Castleton, and then pursuing the same direction, but with a northerly inclination to Ballater, where we leave it, after a course of upwards of 40 miles from its source. There are no very considerable windings in this portion of its course, nor does it anywhere attain a great depth. Its breadth, however, differs more or less, and in one spot not far from the junction, called the Linn, is only about three feet. The bed of the river

consists entirely of boulders, pebbles, and sand, without any alluvial deposits of clay and mud. From this circumstance, as well as from the rapidity of its current, it is remarkably destitute of aquatic plants.

On both sides it receives a large number of tributaries, several of which are of considerable size. Commencing on the north-west, we have the *Lui* water, formed of two small streams, the *Lui Beg* and the *Derry*, from the south and north-east of Ben Macdhuì respectively. Uniting together about four miles from their sources, they form the *Lui*, which, running in a south-east direction, parallel to the *Dee* for upwards of six miles, falls into that river a short distance below the *Linn*. Three miles east from the *Lui* we come to the *Quoich*, which has also two sources, the one of which rises in the western extremity of the north top of *Bennaboord*, and the other in a small loch at its eastern extremity. After their union, the *Quoich* becomes a considerable stream, flowing rapidly over a stony and rocky bed, until it reaches the *Dee*, and forming in one part of its course several rather pretty though, except when swollen with rain, not very large waterfalls. There are several other small streams to the eastward of this, such as the *Sluggan* water from *Craigandal*, which flows into the *Dee* opposite *Braemar Castle*, and the *Burn of Crathie*, from *Culardach*, which joins it nearly opposite *Balmoral*; but none of them present any striking features requiring our notice. We therefore pass on to the *Gairn Water*, the largest tributary of the *Dee* upon the north, formed by a number of mountain rivulets from *Ben Aun* and *Craigandal*, which unite together about two miles from their bases. It then flows first in a northerly and then in an easterly direction for 12 miles, chiefly through moorlands, but occasionally through pastures, receiving by the way on both sides a number of small rills from the ridges on the north and south, as well as from those in the interior. It then runs south-east for three miles along a stony channel,

encumbered here and there with detritus, bordered sometimes by rocks ornamented with trees and shrubs, and falls into the Dee near Craigandarroch, after effectually draining the whole interior tract of country lying between Ben Aun and Ballater.

On the other side, commencing at the south-west, the Dee receives the *Geaully*, from Cairn Ealer and Scarsach, which flows through a marshy and peaty moor, first in a northerly direction for three miles, and then due west for nine miles to the junction, receiving in its course several smaller contributions. The principal of these on the north are *Davy More* and *Davy Beg*, from Ben Votran, a high hill south of Cairntoul, and on the south the *Bynnoch*, from a hill of the same name on the east of Scarsach. The Geaully seems to have equal claims with the streams from the north to be considered as the main channel of the Dee, being of an equal length with them. In one respect its claims are even superior, since the glen through which it flows is on the same line, and continuous with the valley of the Dee. Four miles and a-half from the junction we come to the *Ey* water, which having its source in the Gelly Hill and Ben Uarn, flows in a northerly direction, with a considerable curve in one part to the east, over a bed strewn with boulders of all shapes and sizes, sometimes between high banks on either side, and through deep narrow rents in the rocks, forming numerous rapids and small cascades, and falls into the Dee near the hamlet of Inverey, after a course of nearly eight miles. Near Castleton, the Dee is joined by the *Cluny* water, a larger tributary from the Glassmeal, afterwards increased by the Baddoch, a stream of equal bulk from the south-west. About four miles farther on, it again receives the Callater, which rises on the south side of the Lochnagar group, and, receiving several mountain rills by the way, expands into a loch of the same name, from which it flows north-west for four miles to the junction. The three united streams then run

northwards for three and a-half miles to the Dee. The bed of each is covered with stones, and sometimes paved with the solid rock, but nowhere are the banks high, except at the Bridge of Castleton; where they are covered with various plants and shrubs. Passing over the Gelder from Lochnagar, which joins the Dee at Invergelder, and the Girnac from the south-east, which joins it between Abergeldie and Ballater, both streams of no great size, and presenting no remarkable features, we come to the *Muic*, the largest tributary of the Dee upon the south. Having its source near Cairn Taggart, it flows first south-east through a deep ravine between the mountains, with lofty precipices on both sides, forming in one place a small lake called Dhuloch, with a range of magnificent perpendicular cliffs of great height, and in another a succession of noisy cataracts, as it leaps from rock to rock, and dashes against the boulders which strew its bed. It afterwards expands into a loch of the same name, of considerable size and depth, and then runs north-east to Ballater, where it joins the Dee after a course of about 15 miles. It receives by the way a number of lesser contributions, the principal of which is the Glass-Alt, with a rather romantic fall in one place of 160 feet in height, and flows in a rocky, pebbly, or sandy bed, with a rapid current, and occasionally pretty high banks, ornamented with birch, alder, and willows. About five miles from Ballater it rushes through a narrow pass fringed with trees, in the heart of a fine fir wood, at the north extremity of which it hurls itself over a high precipice into a deep foaming pool beneath, presenting at all times a rather beautiful, and, after heavy rains, a somewhat grand spectacle, well worthy of a visit.

So much, then, for the principal streams of Braemar, which are but a tithe of the numerous mountain rills which descend in every direction to feed the Dee; and any one who has seen the very considerable body of water which they pour into that river, cannot but be a little

astonished that it is not broader and deeper than it really is all the way down from Castleton. Evaporation may so far account for this ; but there is no doubt it is to be attributed principally to the uniform rapidity of its current over a hard and stony channel, carrying away at once as much as it gets, and preventing pools, except in a few places, from being formed.

SECTION II.—LOCHS.

Besides thus possessing water in the shape of numerous streams, Braemar has also a considerable quantity in the shape of numerous lochs. Though pretty frequent, they are, in general, of no great extent, and being for the most part quite destitute of trees along their margins, they thus possess little grandeur and beauty in themselves. The larger are situated in the glens, and look well enough in a clear summer day ; the smaller lie on elevated ridges, and even towards the mountain tops, and have a bare cold aspect alike in sunshine and in storm. Still, however, they are quite in keeping with, and serve to complete the details of, the surrounding scenery, from which they borrow a wild magnificence unknown to Lowland lakes. True it is that they do not possess their gentle beauty, pellucid waters, sandy beds, pebbly strands, and verdant banks ; for amidst these desolate glens and desert mountains this would be quite out of place. With these, their dark waters flowing over rocky beds, and washing a stony strand margined not by trees but by huge precipitous cliffs, far better harmonise. The principal and most characteristic of these lochs are Muic, Callater, Aun, and Kinnor.

Loch *Muic* is situated in a narrow plain towards the head of the glen, and is formed principally by the Muic stream, though it also receives various other feeders from the mountains on both sides. It is about two miles in

length and half a mile in breadth, surrounded by lofty ranges of steep hills, which are furrowed deeply by the mountain torrents, overhung in some parts by the frowning precipices and rocky declivities of Lochnagar—having its sides encumbered with huge blocks of stones, varied with occasional heaps of granitic detritus, and frequent beds of streams, which are sometimes dry and sometimes running. Its water is dark but pure, generally shallow, but in some places apparently of considerable depth, with but a few aquatic plants rearing their heads above its surface, or floating on its bosom—diversified with but one small solitary island at its upper extremity, with a few trees of no great height nor beauty. It has here and there on both sides several small clumps of stunted trees and bushes, growing chiefly in the crevices of the rocks, and by the rills; but they are neither continuous nor umbrageous. The scenery around the loch is peculiarly grand and striking, rising to the sublime at its head, where it is stopped by a circumvallation of rugged cliffs, above which tower lofty mountains; more tame at its mouth, where the ground becomes flatter and the hills lower, as the glen begins to open out. Taking everything into account, it is about the best specimen of a genuine Highland loch we could find—neither too tame nor too wild. And in an autumn evening, when the setting sun is pouring a flood of glory upon its waters, and its asperities are softened down by the soothing light that falls upon them, and the long dark shadows of the hills are mirrored on its bosom, and its surface is smooth as glass, save where it sparkles and dances beneath the gentle zephyrs, as if to catch the departing rays of the sun, or is broken into concentric circles, as the trout leap up for some incautious insect, it will well repay a visit, and leave a deep impression on our minds.

Loch *Callater* is similarly situated at the head of the glen, and is formed by the union of two rapid streams

from the hills on the south and east, and fed by a few torrents from the outlying ridges of Lochnagar. The heights by which it is bounded are of no great size, destitute of those precipices and torrent grooves which characterise the mountains at Loch Muic, though high hills covered with detritus and stones are seen a short way above its head. It is only about a mile in length, and of little breadth throughout, destitute of even a single tree or shrub, and with few stones or boulders along its margins, which are bounded on the south by a sloping grassy hill, and on the north by a narrow piece of moorland. Its waters are black, tinged with an infusion of peat—in some parts very deep, but having scarcely any traces of vegetation, although abounding in pike and salmon of large size. Altogether its scenery is neither beautiful nor grand, being in itself a tame, uninteresting sheet of water, redeemed from monotony only by its continuous and curved outline, and the view of the distant hills, which, however, are scarcely near enough for it to borrow any grandeur from them. In fact, the only occasion on which it looks well, except to the disciples of Isaac Walton, is when we descend weary and footsore from the top of Lochnagar, and then it is a welcome sight telling us that half of the journey is over.

Loch *Aun* is situated in a deep hollow between Ben Macdhui and Cairngorm, and is entirely formed by innumerable small rills which descend from the summits of these mountains in all directions, and by three or four larger streams which pour down through deep ravines or over rugged cliffs. It is nearly two and a half miles long, rather narrow, surrounded on all sides by mountain ridges, and ranges of precipices in some parts 1000 feet high, rising perpendicularly from the water, and occasionally split into wide rents, and broken up into large rocks. Its waters are of a bluish colour, becoming green towards the side, and are remarkably cool and clear, issuing as they often do from large deep patches of un-

melted snow, and flowing over a bed entirely free from mud, composed of granite rocks and boulders margined by detritus so finely disintegrated as sometimes to present the same appearance as the yellow sands of the sea-beach. Its surface is as totally destitute of any trace of vegetation as its sides are of trees and shrubs; while numerous though small trout are all the symptoms of life that are to be seen amidst its desolate waters. The scenery is about the most magnificent, and at the same time the very wildest, that can possibly be conceived, defying alike the pen of the poet and the brush of the painter to delineate it in all its details.

Loch *Kinnor*, or *Ceannor*, of which a fine view may be got as we journey along from Aboyne to Ballater, lies on the east of Culbleen, at the north-western end of the Moor of Dinnet. As might be expected from its situation on the confines of the Lowlands, it partakes less of a purely Highland character than the preceding. It is about two miles in length, but generally of no great depth, finely wooded with birch on its northern side, where the braes of Cromar, with their extensive patches of cultivation, form an admirable background, and contrast well with the surrounding expanse of heathy ground. On the south and west, where the moor is lower, it becomes rather marshy, and consequently, after heavy rains, covers a much larger area than usual in these directions—the small burn of Dinnet, by which it, as well as a smaller loch in the neighbourhood called Dava, is drained, being unable to carry off the surplus water. It contains two islands, evidently of artificial formation, the larger of which, to the westward, fringed with stunted trees on the sides, is known by the name of Malcolm Canmore's Island, on which, in the days of yore, was a castle in which the king confined his prisoners. There is a much more abundant and varied vegetation to be found on its surface and by its sides than in any of the other lochs. The white and yellow

water-lilies, seen nowhere else in the district, float upon its bosom, amongst the reeds at its western extremity ; the water lobelia, with its clusters of light-blue drooping flowers, is scattered here and there in the same direction ; the quillwort is not uncommon in the shallow water ; while carices and horsetails are very abundant in some parts along its margin. Nor is it less deficient in reference to its fauna, frequented as it is in winter by large flocks of geese, and at all seasons by the wild duck and teal, supplying victims for the gun of the sportsman ; while numerous pike, and trout of large size, afford first-rate play for the rod of the angler. It receives towards the north-west a small stream called the Burn of Vat, remarkable for a rather singular phenomenon, caused by the water when swollen having scooped out on either side a large opposing mass of granite into a concave form, like half the top of a dome—a natural curiosity well worthy of a walk from Ballater to see, and sure to excite the wonder of the tourist.

Besides these, there are many smaller upland sheets of water amongst the mountains, which are generally termed tarns, such as Duloch, west of Muic—Vrotochan, north-west of Cairnwall—Quoich, south-east of the north top of Ben-na-board—Etagan, north-east of Ben Macdhui—and several others of less extent, particularly in the corries, some of which we shall visit in our excursions. All these, however, possess nearly the same characteristics, and are surrounded with similar scenery, so that one description would apply to all alike, as far as their general features are concerned. Their waters are commonly black and deep, lying upon rocky beds, entirely destitute of aquatic vegetation,—situated between high perpendicular crags, surrounded by scenery which, with a mixture of the sublime, is remarkably bare and bleak, tolerable only in a summer day, when the sun is shining brightly upon them, and warming into something like life their otherwise desolate aspect.

It will thus be seen from this imperfect notice, that although Braemar may not derive very many elements of its charms from its lakes, yet we could not dispense therewith without these charms in several localities being very much diminished. If it is true, as is generally the case with them all, that they borrow their attractions from the neighbouring mountain scenery, yet it is equally true that they help to complete and so far to relieve that scenery.

CHAPTER IV.

FORESTS AND MOORS.

SECTION I.—FORESTS.

WE come now to the third primary object which must enter into the composition of a romantic landscape—viz. wood, of which Braemar is certainly by no means destitute. From Ballater, on nearly to its junction with the Geaully, the whole valley of the Dee throughout, as well as the lower part of several of the glens, and the hills in its immediate vicinity, are abundantly supplied with wood; and this not in solitary clumps of trees, or in isolated and distant patches, but in one continuous and unbroken mass, broader, of course, in one place than in another, and differing in kind and in luxuriance. The wood is for the most part unquestionably indigenous, consisting chiefly of pine and birch, interspersed with several other trees, generally standing apart, but occasionally in small thickets. The principal of these are alder, and several varieties of willow, not uncommon by the sides of the streams; mountain-ash and aspen pretty frequent in the woods. Oak is very rarely met with, except in the neighbourhood of Ballater, where it covers and gives its name to the hill of Craigandaroch, but attaining no great size, probably from being frequently cut; and thus our forests, noble though they be, want the stately and majestic presence of the acknowledged

monarch of trees. The beech occurs here and there, but is evidently not a native, which, perhaps, is also the case with regard to the ash—neither of which, however, are very often seen. Large plantations of larch, intermixed with spruce, are frequently met with throughout the district, and though not native, yet thrive remarkably well, and relieve with their lighter tints the dark foliage of the pine.

The *birch*, popularly birk, poetically birchen (*Betula alba*), forms by far the largest portion of the wood of Braemar, extending in an almost uninterrupted line from below Ballater to the lower glens of the Cairngorm range. It forms pretty large forests in some places, especially at Coille-crìch, in the neighbourhood of Abergeldie and Balmoral, and at Morrone, near Castleton. There is nothing more pleasant than to traverse a small birch wood in the morning, and inhale the sweet fragrance of the trees, after they have drank of the dewy nectar of heaven, and listen to the matin songs of the birds as they fly from branch to branch rejoicing in the sunshine, and mark the various wild flowers of every hue of the rainbow, which grow amidst the short grass at our feet. When it is very extensive, however, it is very apt to become rather fatiguing to the eye and monotonous to the feelings from the sameness of scenery. In such a case they look best when surveyed from some neighbouring height, where green fields and farmhouses are seen around their bases, and their uniformity of appearance is more interrupted. The birch is but of moderate size and thickness, seldom exceeding 40 feet in height, and 3½ feet in girth. Its stem is generally erect, covered with smooth white bark, which in old trees becomes cracked and broken at the lower part. The leaves differ considerably in size and colour, sometimes even on the same tree—a circumstance which prevents us from fancying that they belonged to several varieties, which otherwise we might naturally be inclined to suppose. Such is the

normal form and appearance of the birch; but in our progress through the woods, we frequently meet with considerable deviations therefrom. Sometimes the stems are seen to be compound, six or eight, and even more, rising from the same root, very much crooked and distorted; at other times they are very slender, erect, and crowded, looking with their white bark and upright growth like a "silvery colonnade." As we advance towards the margins of the forests, along the hill-sides, we meet with more aged trees in damp situations, which are occasionally of greater dimensions than usual, but bent and gnarled and knotted, sometimes with the bark quite stripped off from the lower part of their stems, and sometimes thickly covered with moss and lichens. Frequently also they have degenerated into thick stunted and spreading bushes, densely clothed with leaves; so that we thus occasionally have specimens of the birch in its largest and smallest conditions, growing side by side in the same locality. The tree, however, is generally most graceful in form and beautiful in foliage, divided into many branches, and these again subdivided into innumerable twigs, and well worthy of the name which the poets have given it, "The Lady of the Woods." And whether we gaze on it as it gently rustles in the summer zephyr, or sways to and fro in the autumn gale,—as it sparkles with watery jewels in the sunshine, when the rain is over and gone, filling the air with the sweetest fragrance in spring, or casts off from its brown naked boughs the snowy shroud which winter would fain throw upon it, we must own that it is a fair, if not magnificent tree, whose absence from the forest we would sadly miss. Its principal variety which we often everywhere meet with is that known by the name of the "weeping birch"—a still more graceful tree, universally admired for its "long dishevelled hair." It is distinguished from the common form by its brown fissured stem and thinner leaves, by its greater height and more

drooping form, by its more slender branches and more delicate twigs. Such variety of form and appearance serves very much to relieve the birch forest from that sameness which would otherwise characterise it, and, along with the variety of its lesser vegetation, enables the eye to gaze upon it without weariness longer than otherwise it could.

The other kind of wood which is most abundant in Braemar is the *Scotch pine* (*Pinus sylvestris*), the only species of fir indigenous to the district. It extends over a very considerable space, breaking in upon the birch, though seldom banishing it entirely. From the Linn of Dee to Inver on the north, and from Craig Cluny to Balmoral on the south side of the river, it is almost continuous, forming the extensive and celebrated forests of Mar and Ballochbuie—part of the ancient *Sylva Caledonia*, through which, in the days of old, the kings of Scotland were wont to chase the deer. These, which severally occupy a space of many miles, and cover an area of many thousand acres, seem to have been at one time very considerably larger, and, in fact, to have stretched over the whole district, as may be inferred from the decayed stems and broken stumps which are everywhere scattered at considerable distances beyond their present borders, not merely in the glens, but even far up on the hill-sides. This is no doubt to be attributed partly to the work of winter, whose fell blasts, sweeping down the glens in fury, have prostrated many a noble tree on the outskirts of the forest, but partly also, and chiefly, to the work of man, whose destroying hand has cut down many a giant stem, and left the yet scarcely obliterated marks of the woodman's axe upon their roots. The pine forest has a sombre and solemn appearance, alike when we wander through it or gaze upon it from a distance. This results from the dark green foliage, the great height and close propinquity of the trees. No one can traverse its dusky, tall columnar

aisles, where the strirring sound of the world's beehive does not penetrate, where the fitful moaning of the wind, and the rushing of the mountain cataract alone is heard, without his feelings being deeply solemnised, and a train of melancholy reflections being awakened. Nor even when we stand in some of those open glades which frequently occur where the trees are less crowded, and the grass looks fresh and green, and the sun shines brightly on the sward, will these feelings and reflections be very much altered, since we cannot turn away our eyes from, or become mentally oblivious to, the surrounding gloom and silence. The pines of Braemar rarely attain a height of more than 50 feet and a girth of 10 feet, although fifty years ago they were of far greater dimensions. Of this size, however, there are many splendid trees, especially in the Ballochbuie. They assume a very great variety of form and appearance. The trunk is always remarkably straight and tapering; the roots numerous and wide-spreading; the bark reddish-brown, in plates, with long intersecting fissures; the branches many and much divided, spreading out horizontally, or slightly bending downwards; the leaves in pairs all around the boughs, which gradually get smaller and more contracted towards the top. When fully developed in a suitable situation, it looks remarkably well, covering a great extent of ground, and raising its pyramidal crown high into the air. But when crowded together it is a much less beautiful object, the stem in this case being like a tall bare spar with only a few branches at its upper extremity. Sometimes, in the higher and more exposed glens, they assume a variety of fantastic forms, especially in the outskirts of Mar forest. The Scotch fir is a far more valuable tree than the birch, and is employed for many important architectural purposes. Hence the pine forests of Braemar, with their magnificent trees, are very valuable indeed, and were they cut down, which we trust will never take place,

would be worth many hundred thousand pounds to their proprietors.

These forests and woods are maintained partly, it is to be hoped, for the beauty which they lend to the surrounding scenery, but principally as feeding grounds and coverts for large herds of deer which form their chief inmates, and have here plenty of room to range in, and plenty to eat and drink when they descend from the upper glens and hills. Besides these, there are but few other traces of animal life to be met with to relieve the monotony of the forest; but to see a herd of these noble animals bounding away through the trees, seeming scarcely to touch the ground with their hoofs, is indeed a magnificent sight, which of itself would well repay a visit to Braemar.

SECTION II.—MOORS.

We proceed now to notice another element which we conceive is just as requisite to complete the details of a Highland landscape—viz. moors. Of these Braemar has plenty and to spare, as every mountain rambler in the district knows to his cost. They are of all sizes, occupying here but a few acres, and stretching there over many miles of ground; and are everywhere to be met with up amongst the mountains and down in the glens, along the side of the streams and in the heart of the woods. Though when viewed from a distance they seem all alike, yet on a closer inspection they are found to differ considerably from each other in various respects. When they occur towards the summits of the hills, their soil consists of gravel and detritus, covered chiefly with short blackish heather; in lower situations it consists of hard turf, covered with long brown heath and grass; by the streams it is composed principally of soft peat, covered with various kinds of moss, grass, and carices. They are

pretty dry where the heather abounds, and may then be termed heaths; and very wet where the moss abounds, and may then be termed swamps. Where the grass predominates over the heather and the moss respectively, they become alternately a swamp or a heath after long continued rains or long protracted droughts. Their appearance, though not uniformly so, is generally very bleak and forbidding; but this is only quite in keeping with the rest of the scenery. It is, however, somewhat relieved in the autumn by the purple flowers of the "bonnie bloomin' heather;" although, as this is but the common ling, it is neither so attractive nor visible at a distance as the other species. Still nothing is more fatiguing to the eye than to gaze upon a long, dark, heathy moor, whose outline is broken only by heaps of white bleached stones, or wide black ruts which the wintry storms have made, or deep brownish pools of muddy stagnant water, and whose vegetation is varied only by low juniper bushes, or a few weird-like stunted birches. And nothing is more fatiguing to the feet than to traverse a wide, dreary, swampy moor, where the water flows sluggishly, and its course is often lost, on which we are afraid to tread firmly lest the moss should give way beneath us, and we be swallowed up, or to leap from one tuft of grass to another, lest, in shunning the quagmire of Scylla, we should fall into the peat hole of Charybdis.

But yet the tourist must occasionally trudge over many miles of moorland, leaping the bogs and the peaty fissures, forcing his way through the long heather and prickly junipers, and fetching wide circuits to avoid the yielding marshes, before he can reach the top of the lofty mountain for which he is bound. Well for him if he be a naturalist too, for he will find many varieties of animal and vegetable life to relieve the monotony of the scene, which, with only the prospect before him to cheer him onwards, is twice as fatiguing, both to eye and foot,

as when, all around him, he can find objects worthy of his notice, and stone and moss and water are alike eloquent, speaking a language he well understands in tones he loves to hear. For, desolate and lifeless as they appear at a distance, yet, as we traverse them, the red deer on its way from the hills to the forest, bounds past us o'er the swamp; the grouse rise at our very feet, uttering shrill notes of terror as they fly heavily out of reach; the adder glides hissing from our path, as much afraid of being trodden on by our heel as we are of being bitten by its fangs. Beneath us, too, there is much in the vegetation to claim our attention—in the lichens which cover the stones, and the mosses which carpet the bogs—in many rare and beautiful forms of microscopic diatoms and desmideæ in the pools, as well as in the various flowering plants which grow amongst the grass and heather, and lend variety of colour to the prevailing green and brown. Thus, then, in these and other similar respects, is their natural unpleasant monotony broken, and their general dreary aspect relieved, to the lover of nature; and verily he must have some particular and engrossing object in view before he could make up his mind to endure the fatigue of wandering a whole day across a moor. Still, we should miss it from the landscape just as much, if not even more than glens and lochs—and were it to disappear from their scenery, the Hee'lan's would certainly be no longer what they are to the tourist. And still more would it be missed by the inhabitants themselves, since the peat extracted therefrom, though perhaps inferior in quality to that found in lower districts, composed as it is of imperfectly decayed mosses, carices, and heather, is, in the shape of fuel, the means of keeping a good blazing fire always burning, in hut and hall, during the cold wintry days and nights when John Frost reigns king over hill, wood, and water.

So much, then, for a general description of the natural

features of Braemar, which are all, as we have seen, upon a large scale, and quite in keeping with each other, forming a picture of wild grandeur and sublimity, harmonious in its proportions and complete in its details, nowhere surpassed in Great Britain, seldom equalled in Scotland—the

“ Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood.”

PART II.

NATURAL HISTORY OF BRAEMAR.



CHAPTER V.

GEOLOGY OF BRAEMAR—ROCKS AND MINERALS.

IN a geological point of view, Braemar is characterised more by the magnitude than the variety of its rocks—more by the rarity of some than the abundance of others of its minerals; and apart from this presents but few remarkable peculiarities which are not equally common to other districts of similar formation. But there are very few localities where the primary rocks—for of these it is entirely composed—can be so thoroughly examined as to their individual structure and their mutual relations. The beginner in the science has here a capital field in which to take his first lessons upon a large scale, and learn to distinguish a stratified from an unstratified rock, and to become acquainted with the qualities of the various minerals which enter into their composition; and when once he has made himself master of these lower rocks, which present no difficulty that may not easily be surmounted by observation and reading, he will be better prepared for entering upon the study of the secondary and tertiary strata which he may meet with in other districts. Nor will the more advanced geologist return from their examination disappointed that he has found nothing worthy of his attention; for he will discover in their position, arrangement, connec-

tion, soil, deposits, and general appearance, much to exercise his ingenuity, test the conclusions and alter the hypotheses which he has previously formed in accounting for various interesting phenomena which they present; and he will also perceive a new light thereby thrown upon the more intricate and complex phenomena of structure and appearance in the other strata. Moreover, I can assure both, that by the time they have succeeded in obtaining a sufficient quantity of good specimens for their museum, they will have become quite adepts in wielding the hammer and chisel, and need not be ashamed of showing their skill before an inspecting committee of Section C of the British Association. True it is that they cannot here expect to meet with any of those traces of pre-Adamite life which the tyro and the savan are alike delighted to find in the fossiliferous strata, for everything speaks of an epoch innumerable ages anterior to that of the creation of animal or vegetable life. But still this, instead of detracting from, will, when properly viewed, but add to the interest of the primary rocks, since it leads us back in imagination to that unknown and incomprehensible period "in the beginning," when the earth, now begun to rise above the waste of the primeval waters, was yet a chaos, "without form and void," and when the primeval fires which upheaved the granite had ceased to glow, "and darkness was upon the face of the deep."

The geology of the whole district may be viewed generally according to the different rocks of which its strata are composed as belonging to two great groups—the granitic and the slaty. These are distributed in almost equal proportion; the one sometimes predominating, and sometimes the other, in the different mountain ranges. Of the granitic rocks, the Cairngorm group, with the exception of some of the lower declivities on the south and east, is composed throughout. So also are many of the hills in the Glengairn range, and the whole

mass of the Lochnagar group, with the exception of some of the outlying ridges. There is generally no particular arrangement to be observed in their mass; but sometimes on the precipices they show a tendency to the columnar, and frequently where exposed to the tabular structure, being intersected by perpendicular fissures and rectangular clefts. These when broken off form large slabs, in some places on the mountains so abundant, that, by using a little agility, we may walk upon them as on a pavement, for a considerable distance. We are not, however, to regard this as a mark of stratification, to which at first sight it bears a great resemblance, but as the result first of concussion from internal, and afterwards of disintegration from external causes. In its mineralogical structure, the granite is generally more coarsely grained, and of a more reddish colour than in the lower parts of the country. There are, however, occasional exceptions to both of these qualities, and we sometimes find it as white, and at other times as fine, as elsewhere. Of the latter, the reddish grey stone of which Balmoral is built, and which was quarried on the property, is an example. Its constituent minerals are felspar, forming nearly three fourths of the mass to which it gives its colour, in concretions of all sizes, sometimes in irregular crystals, flesh coloured normally, but becoming white in water; quartz in much less than the usual quantity, irregular in form, sometimes crystalline, dark grey, but varying a little in shade; mica in very small proportion to the others, forming small thin scales, black or brownish black in colour. The quartz is sometimes found in the dusky cavities, but more frequently among the detritus in large and beautiful crystals, popularly known by the name of "Cairngorm stones,"—smoke brown and yellow, fetching a considerable price when cut and polished by the lapidary. Crystals of topaz and beryl, as also of amethyst, all varying in size and colour, are occasionally picked up after considerable search,

or more frequently by accident, without any search at all.

Of the slaty rocks, the Glen-Ey group is composed throughout, as also the lower ridges of the Lochnagar range, and nearly the half of the Glengairn group. The slate is of two kinds—viz. quartzose mica slate, and hornblendic slate—the former occurring in much greater quantity than the latter in all the groups. Gneiss, the rock which succeeds granite in the regular series, and which is not uncommon farther eastward all the way to the sea-coast where it is most abundant, can scarcely with propriety be said to occur in Braemar, at least in its normal type, and with its characteristic constituents. In all cases where it seems to occur it is found to contain few if any traces of felspar, and may therefore virtually be regarded as mica slate, or when hornblende enters into its composition as hornblendic slate. The quartzose mica slate, as this formation may generally be called, differs considerably in appearance and structure according to its mineralogical composition. While occasionally it very much resembles gneiss, it sometimes also presents all the appearance of quartz rock proper, though scarcely ever quite destitute of mica. Generally, however, it is true mica slate, with laminæ of quartz and mica alternating; the former granular or in plates, generally in greater, sometimes in equal proportion with the mica, which is in small brownish black scales, or in continuous laminæ. The strata are commonly of very considerable thickness, much undulated and contorted, in various degrees of inclination, often broken by the protrusion of masses of granite from beneath, in contact with which they become harder and more crystalline. Beds of limestone of good quality and of great use, crystalline and greyish blue, interspersed with crystals of carbonate of lime, and sometimes containing numerous garnets, frequently occur amongst it; and also large dykes of felspar porphyry, differing in texture and composition from hornstone to

ordinary compact felspar, and sometimes resembling fine grained granite. Crystals of fluor spar, large, beautiful, and variously coloured, galena in cubes and plates, as well as sulphuret of iron, more or less decomposed, are abundant, especially in the southern ridge of the Glen-gairn range. The hornblendic slate, though occurring in many places, is more sparingly distributed than the former, and seldom of itself constitutes the entire mass, or even the greater portion of any hill. While varying far less in appearance, and generally conforming to its normal type, it yet differs considerably in texture and colour. The rock is generally distinctly laminar, and is essentially composed of imperfect crystals of hornblende, intermixed with felspar. Occasionally its structure is massive, but even then it is disposed in strata, and known by the name of greenstone. Sometimes it is so solid and massive as to resemble trap; sometimes it contains more or less quartz and mica, and passes into gneiss; sometimes, when in connection with mica slate, it passes into actinolite slate. The strata have various directions and various degrees of inclination, frequently undulated or tortuous, and very much disturbed and broken. In one place on the Khoil hills, towards the north-east of the Lochnagar range, it is extensively dislocated by a large protruding mass of serpentine, varying considerably in structure and colour, with patches of precious serpentine and talc interspersed, and containing asbestos, schiller spar, specks of mica, and nodules of iron pyrites—extending with various interruptions for nearly three miles, and conspicuous from a considerable distance by its three elevated conical peaks—the only instance of the occurrence of this rock in the district, and on that account all the more interesting.

Such, then, is a brief outline of the nature and composition of the primary rocks of Braemar, which, it will be perceived, graduate into each other, according to the presence or absence of one or other of the three minerals of

which they are essentially composed. There are various phenomena connected with the rupture of the slate by the granite as well as with their points of junction, and various questions in regard to the age and formation of these rocks, whether they are contemporaneous or not, whether they are igneous or aqueous, which well deserve consideration, and which here perhaps may be better elucidated and solved than in most other districts in Britain. The discussion of such matters, however, belongs rather to a formal scientific treatise than to a popular description, and would have little interest to any but an advanced geologist. It is with facts and not with theories that we have to deal—with what every one who knows anything about the subject cannot fail to see with their own eyes, and not with what some few who know it thoroughly may be able to discover by inference. Should any one wish to know more about them in these respects, let him come and examine them for himself, and in all probability he will find the conclusions at which he arrived from personal observation upset and contradicted in the very first book he afterwards reads upon the primary rocks. There is, however, one phenomenon connected both with the granite and slaty rocks, to which it may be as well to make a passing allusion—viz. diluvial or alluvial deposits. In addition to those which we would naturally expect to occur along the valley of the Dee, and which find their maximum breadth and depth in the neighbourhood of Ballater, where they cover a space of nearly three miles, and are very much water-worn, there are numerous other deposits occurring in the upper glens, on the sides of the mountains, and along their bases, composed of the detritus, stones, and boulders of the neighbouring strata, sometimes forming large mounds and tumuli of various shapes and sizes, evidently at a remote period—pre-Adamite or post-Adamite, ante-diluvian or post-diluvian, is of little consequence—washed down from the mountains

by successive torrents, and gradually accumulated *in situ*, deriving their present different forms according to the force and directions of the respective currents.

The primary rocks as a whole are well known to impart to a country a wild and desolate aspect ; and in its main features this is the case with Braemar. Generally speaking, it presents a wide expanse of bare hills, abounding in grand and romantic scenery ; deep semi-circular corries, with dark unfathomed lochs, environed with huge perpendicular precipices, but destitute of the gentler and softer features which characterise the landscapes of the secondary and tertiary strata. But while this is, no doubt, quite correct of it viewed as a whole, yet we find that the appearance of the mountains themselves, as well as the nature of their covering, is very varied, and of different degrees of beauty and fertility, according to the character of the individual rocks which compose its strata. The superficial outlines of the granitic mountains are generally broad and rounded, and thus differ from the pinnacled and serrated or conical forms which they present in other districts ; their summits are for the most part widely flattened, covered with stones and debris, and frequently with large fissured rocks protruding above the surface ; their sides, where not scooped out into corries, strewn with fallen boulders of all shapes and sizes, and heaped upon each other sometimes to a considerable height. Their soil in the upper portions is entirely composed of detritus, which farther down becomes more and more mixed with decayed portions of vegetable substances, and is generally unfavourable to vegetation, which is very scanty and stunted where the soil is pure, and heathy, seldom grassy, even where it is more mixed. The slaty rocks generally present rounded and wavy outlines, with few elevated projections, but with platforms of considerable extent ; their slopes are sometimes very rugged, hollowed like the granite into deep corries with precipitous crags,

strewn with stones and detritus, though not to such a considerable extent, often disposed in the form of terraces more or less distinct, and cut by numerous deep narrow ravines. Their soil differs considerably, according to the nature of the different rocks which constitute their formation; and in places where they occur together, and their detritus is intermingled with vegetable products, it is of a rather complex character. In the true mica slate it is very rich, well adapted for vegetation of various kinds, which is chiefly grassy and mossy rather than heathy, as in the granite; and in the serpentine by which the hornblende is ruptured, it is even of finer quality and greater depth, producing a most nourishing grass. In the hornblende itself, however, especially when hard and massive, and consequently affording a greater resistance to disintegration by exposure to the weather and the action of water, by which all soil is originally produced, it is remarkably thin, poor, and scanty. It is to be observed, however, that the nature of the soil does not influence the vegetation so much as at first sight might be expected, since the granite contains all the mineral constituents which enter into the composition of the slate, and might thus be supposed to be equally favourable to vegetable life.

From what has now been stated, it will be seen that granite forms a much greater portion of the strata than any other individual rock; and that, next to it, mica slate is the most abundant, passing on the one hand into gneiss and on the other into quartz rock, both of which, however, are found only in degenerate forms. The entire mass of all the higher mountains is composed of granite, which thus gives its general tone to the appearance of the primary rocks; and from the fact that everywhere, except in the Glen Ey group, it is distinctly seen mixing itself with and protruding through the slate, it may legitimately be concluded that it is the basis of the whole. To account for its sole, more partial, and non-

appearance in the different ranges, we have only just to suppose that the slate was originally stretched out like a floor above it, and that, once on a time, some millions of years ago, upheaved by some mighty internal force, it knocked a tremendous hole in it at Cairngorm, and scattered it out of its road in all directions ; that after this desperate effort it was unable to make such big holes at Glengairn and Lochnagar, and was therefore forced to leave a part of the floor still standing ; and that, its force being quite exhausted, it could make nothing of the thick floor at Glen Ey, or, at all events, if it managed to push up the boards, it was unable to push itself through them. The illustration is certainly homely, but it at least possesses the merit of being intelligible to all, and probably it is as correct as if expressed in scientific terms, which very often serve to render obscure theories still more obscure. From this intermingling of the strata it necessarily results that the geological limits of the different groups do not exactly correspond with the geographical boundaries we had assigned them ; but this would not have been at all remedied even by subdividing them into a still greater number of ranges.

So much for the geology of Braemar, not the least interesting certainly of its natural features, since it is to this that it owes all its wild grandeur and romantic beauty ;—since from this it derives the character both of its vegetable and animal life. It is a fact, perhaps, too much overlooked, that not only is the nature of the botany of a district affected by its geology, but that the former in its turn will also very much affect its zoology ; and that thus all the three kingdoms are closely linked together, and mutually dependent upon each other. And who shall determine how far the moral character of the inhabitants themselves, as well as their physical and mental constitution, is affected thereby ?

CHAPTER VI.

BOTANY—FLOWERING PLANTS AND CRYPTOGAMICS.

It has frequently been stated, either expressly or inferentially, by writers on geology, that the primary rocks are in a marked degree unfavourable to vegetation. Were such a statement wholly true—though perhaps in some respects it is partially so—it would of course be applicable to Braemar, which is, as we have seen, essentially a primary region. So far, however, is this from being the case, that it has always, and justly, been considered as one of the richest districts in Scotland—in regard, at least, to one class of plants, and that the most interesting of all. The only other locality which can at all compare with it in this respect is the Clova Mountains in Forfarshire ; and, taking all the different forms of vegetation into account, it is difficult to say which of the two bears off the palm. The corries of Lochnagar, Kandor, and Cairntoul, make a very favourable appearance, if not in luxuriance of the same, yet in number of different species, with Canlochan, Glen Dole, and Glen Prosen ; while there are many other less known and more out-of-the-way nooks in which a fine harvest may be gathered.

Still, however, from what we have said of the sterile aspect of the granitic mountains, it might naturally be

inferred that the district was not equally rich, and that any vegetable productions, if found at all on these, would certainly be very few. And such is the general impression amongst those who have never examined them carefully; and such is the conclusion we would come to, when we find them represented by geologists as being to a very extreme degree destitute of vegetation. Yea, we can readily pardon the mere superficial passer-by for exclaiming, as he gazes on their bleak moorlands and bare crags, "There can be no life here." And it is quite true that but very few plants indeed are to be found either amongst the detritus on their summits, or the boulders on their sides. This, however, is to be attributed as much, and even more, to the great height of the mountains, as to the nature of the rock. The sharp, biting winds, cold even in the summer, which sweep across them during spring, nip all incipient vegetation, and effectually check its growth. Hente, with the exception of a very few plants which have their natural habitats at such elevations, and form here and there a scanty sward upon their summits, we find the rest of the vegetation to be very shrivelled and stunted—the flowering plants scarcely attaining a half of their usual size; the mosses blackish-green and without fructification; the lichens bleached and tattered. They thus present a considerable similarity, not perhaps specifically, but in number and magnitude, to those of the arctic regions, proving that the same causes are more or less at work in both to retard and keep down vegetation. But while this is the character of the higher parts of the granitic mountains—while it improves but little even to a considerable distance down their sides—and while at their bases it is still but comparatively sparse and scanty—we are not to infer that it is of a like nature everywhere throughout. On a closer inspection, we shall find that in many places they are peculiarly rich in various interesting forms of vegetation. Some of our rarest Alpine

flowering plants grow luxuriantly by the streams which thunder down their corries, and on the wet shelving ledges of their precipitous cliffs ; while the blocks which strew their sides are covered with many beautiful lichens, and the barren moors, up even in close proximity to the snow, are productive of some species of mosses of the freshest green and most delicate structure.

The flora of the slaty rocks, again, is, as might be expected, much more extensive than that of the preceding, in so far as continuity and luxuriance of vegetation is concerned. This is undoubtedly to be attributed in great part to the nature of the soil, which, being generally of a greater depth and of a richer description, is more adapted for the growth and development of plants. Add to this the frequent presence of shaded rocks and streams upon their sides, of wooded glens and forests of pine and birch along their bases, and you can easily account for the greater abundance of their vegetation. All these adventitious circumstances unquestionably so far result from, and are dependent upon, the composition of the rock, which is more easily disintegrated, and its detritus more readily and minutely dissolved, and consequently more capable of retaining moisture, and more favourable for vegetable purposes, than the granite. But there is also another circumstance, and one, as we conceive, of even primary importance, from which these result, to be taken into account, namely, the fact that they are more protected from the destroying blasts and biting frosts of winter and early spring by their lower elevation, and the higher granitic peaks around them. Accordingly, on any of the loftier, more isolated and exposed slaty ridges, we find the same scanty vegetation as on the latter, with even fewer flowering plants. This, however, while sufficient to prove our assertion, is an exception to the general character of the *Schistose* flora. The corries and crags, the streams and ravines, are for the most part clothed with a rich and varied vegetation,

which, for the number and variety of its species, is scarcely surpassed in Scotland. Flowering plants and cryptogamics are equally luxuriant and abundant in their relative situations; and perhaps no better illustration of the change of general vegetation could be given, than the circumstance that the heath, which was entirely continuous on the granite, is here broken in upon by large and frequent patches of various kinds of grass and moss, feeding upon, and in turn giving food to the soil.

With these preliminary but useful observations, we now proceed to give a brief enumeration of the more peculiar plants of Braemar. As the lowest part of the district in the plain of Ballater is 800 feet above the level of the sea, it is of course more especially characterised by the abundance of the flora belonging to Alpine and sub-Alpine regions, than by that belonging to lower districts, although of this it is by no means destitute. For, up to within a few hundred feet of the summits of the highest mountains, various Lowland plants may be found, extending from an altitude of less than 3 on the sea-coast to considerably more than 3000 feet—thus connecting, botanically, the sea-cliffs with the mountain corries, the sands of the German Ocean with the detritus of Cairngorm. The Alpine plants, however, constitute its great attraction to the wandering botanist; and were it not in search of these, we could scarcely hope that he would find sufficient inducement in the others, which, however, are in many respects very interesting, to visit this remote neighbourhood. It will therefore be enough for our present purpose—which is to give, not a catalogue of all that may be found, but a guide to what the botanist comes here to find—to make mention only of the more characteristic and peculiar of these, both phænogamous and cryptogamic, stating anything worthy of notice connected with their habitats, appearance, and distribution. Amongst them will be found many rare forms of vegetable life which gladden the botanist's eye when he

sees them in the herbarium, and still more his heart when he discovers them in their native stations, adorning the rocks with their many-coloured blossoms, their delicate leaflets and curious thalli. Well indeed do they repay, not merely a long journey to see them, but also the great risk of limb and life not unfrequently incurred before they can be gathered.

I. FLOWERING PLANTS AND FERNS.—All the rarer phænogamous plants of Braemar, which flower in July and August, at an elevation of 2000 to 4000 feet, are to be found amongst the mountains of the Cairngorm and Lochnagar groups, and more especially in the corries of Cairntoul, Ben-naboord, Kandor, and Lochnagar. When, therefore, no particular habitat in the following enumeration is assigned to a plant, it is to be understood as common to all of these well-known and most frequented localities. Amongst the more characteristic species may be mentioned—

Thalictrum alpinum (Alpine meadow-rue), frequent amongst the rocks of the corries and the gravel of the mountains. *Arabis petræa* (Alpine rock cress), common on the precipices of all the higher mountains, and by the streams at a lower elevation. *Silene acaulis* (Moss campion), abundant in large patches on the wet ledges of the corries. *Stellaria cerastoides* (Alpine stitchwort), not unfrequent by the streams of the Cairngorm mountains. *Cerastium alpinum* and *C. latifolium* (Alpine mouse-ear chickweeds), the former more common on the Lochnagar, and the latter on the Cairngorm range, are apparently only varieties of the same plant. *Astragalus alpinus* (Alpine milk vetch), not common on the grassy sward of Little Craighaudal, a very rare plant, found elsewhere only on the Clova mountains in Glen Dole. *Dryas octopetala* (Mountain avens), not very frequent in scattered tufts on Cairntoul, Ben-naboord, and Little Craighandal. *Epilobium alpinum* (Alpine willow herb), common by the brooks and rills, as well as in the corries

of the mountains. *Saxifraga cæspitosa* (Tufted alpine saxifrage), occasionally in the corries of Ben-naboord and by the streams of the precipices on Ben Ann. *Saxifraga rivularis* (Alpine brook saxifrage), a rare British plant, frequent in both corries of Lochnagar and Cairntoul, found elsewhere on Ben Lawers and Ben Nevis. *Saxifraga nivalis* (Clustered alpine saxifrage), not common on the Cairngorm group, loving to grow near the melting snow, from which it takes its name. *Saxifraga oppositifolia* (Purple mountain saxifrage), not unfrequent on the wet ledges of the corrie of Cairntoul ; more scarce on that of Loch Kandor. *Linnæa borealis* (Two-flowered Linnæa), apparently common amongst moss in all the fir woods, as in two localities east of Invercauld House, where it covers a space of many square yards. *Saussurea alpina* (Alpine saw-wort), frequent on the moist rocks of the corries in the Cairngorm and Lochnagar groups. *Mulgedium alpinum* (Alpine sow-thistle), rare on the northern ridges of the great corry of Lochnagar, found elsewhere only on the Clova mountains in Glen Prosen. *Hieracium alpinum* (Alpine hawkweed), in the corrie of Lochnagar, and here and there amongst the rocks of the other mountains, assuming a more luxuriant form than usual on the wet ledges, in which case it is the *H. Halleri* of some authors. *Hieracium nigrescens* (Black-headed hawkweed), pretty frequent on Braeriach, Loch Etagan rocks, and the corrie of Lochnagar, but more jagged in the leaves than specimens from Clova. *Hieracium cerinthoides* (Honey wort hawkweed), rocks of the Cairngorm mountains and corrie of Lochnagar, specifically the same with *H. Lawsoni*, which is here found in much lower situations, as along the banks of the Dee. Besides these, many other hawkweeds, rare and peculiar, are found in several habitats, but most of them are evidently only varieties of a few species not yet determined, differing according to soil and elevation. *Azalea procumbens* (Trailing azalea), pretty frequent on gravelly or peaty soil

amongst the rocks in both groups. *Veronica alpina* (Alpine speedwell), occasionally by the streams of the higher mountains. *Gnaphalium supinum* (Dwarf cudweed), abundant on all the higher mountains in the district. *Erigeron alpinus* (Alpine fleabane), not very common in the corries of the Cairngorm and Lochnagar ranges. *Salix herbacea* (Dwarf willow), not uncommon towards the summits of the Cairngorm and Lochnagar ranges. *Salix arenaria* (Sand willow), here and there by the stream from the Duloch, with its variety, *S. Stuartiana*, which is found also in Glen Callater. *Salix myrsinites* (Green whortle-leaved willow), rather rare on the rocks in the corries, an unusual plant. *Salix reticulata* (Wrinkled willow), in the corrie of Loch Kandor, and occasionally by the streams in Glen Callater, and on Lochnagar along with *S. lanata* (Woolly willow), a very beautiful and much less common shrub, found also in Glen Dole in Clova. *Tofieldia palustris* (Marsh asphodel), not uncommon on wet grassy places on most of the mountains. *Juncus castaneus* (Clustered alpine rush), frequent in the marsh at the head of Loch Callater, along with *J. triglumis* (Three-flowered rush), which is found also on Little Craigandal and Lochnagar. *Juncus trifidus* (Three-leaved rush), on the summits amongst the detritus of the higher mountains in both groups. *Luzula arcuata* (Curved wood rush), in occasional tufts upon the summits and shoulders of Ben Macdhui and Lochnagar, with a downward range of 700 feet. *Carex rupestris* (Rock carex), not uncommon on the rocky ledges of Lochnagar and Cairntoul, along with *C. leporina* (Hare's carex), a much rarer plant, and apparently peculiar to the district. *Carex aquatilis* (Water carex), not common in wet marshes above Loch Callater and near Ben-naboard, found elsewhere in Clova. *Carex VahlII* (Vahl's Carex), scattered on the rocks above Loch Kandor, rare and nearly exterminated. *Carex pauciflora* (Few-flowered carex), pretty common in bogs about Lochnagar and Craig-

andul. *Carex saxatilis* (Russet carex), very uncommon on Cairntoul and Braeriach, along with *C. vaginata* (Brown spiked carex), which is only an alpine variety of *C. panicea*. *Phleum alpinum* (Alpine timothy-grass), common on the wet moors of the Cairngorm and Lochnagar ranges. *Aira alpina* (Alpine hair-grass), frequent on the higher mountains, but in all probability only a variety of *A. caespitosa*. *Poa minor* (Wavy meadow-grass), scarcely different from the rarer *P. laxa*, and *P. Balfourii*, evidently but a variety of the common *P. nemoralis*, are both found sparingly on Lochnagar.

Amongst the more characteristic Ferns of the district may be mentioned *Polypodium alpestre* (Alpine polypody), frequent by the streams on all the higher mountains to an elevation of 3500 feet. *Aspidium lonchitis* (Alpine shield fern), not uncommon on the rocks, and particularly abundant on the north face of Morrone. *Cystopteris fragilis* var. *dentata* (Brittle bladder fern), everywhere common upon the rocks, and very luxuriant by the streams. *C. montana* (Mountain bladder fern), very rare upon the rocks in corries of Lochnagar, Kandor, and Cairntoul. *Asplenium viride* (Green spleenwort), everywhere common, and very fine by the streams in the wood of Moorone. *A. septentrionale* (Forked spleenwort), extremely rare, a few tufts having been found on the precipices of the Pass of Ballater, the Big Nose, and the Raven's Crag. *Cryptogramma crispa* (Curled rock-brake), here and there amongst stones on the higher mountains, but sparingly in fruit.

So much, then, for some of the more characteristic flowering plants and ferns of Braemar. The list might easily have been very much extended, but these are sufficient to prove how choice a locality it is for the botanist in which to search for them, and how well his rambles amongst the crags, the streams, and the corries, will be rewarded. We proceed now, in like manner, to enumerate a few of the more interesting cryptogamics,

in which it certainly carries off the palm over every other similar district in Scotland.

II. FLOWERLESS PLANTS.—These are to be met with everywhere—on the mountain tops and in the bed of streams—on the wet rocks and in the dry woods—on bleached boulders and decaying trees—sometimes the heralds, at other times the memorials, of a higher vegetable life. In fact, the district may safely be said to be the much-loved home of the cryptogamics, where some of them flourish in a way which nowhere else they think of doing, and where but comparatively few of the whole of the British species may not be found. Many of them are, from their rarity, most interesting to the botanist, and some of them he has, in all probability, never seen, as they are only in their season long before the tourists' season has begun, when the first warm breath of spring begins to melt the winter's snow upon the hills.

1. *Mosses*.—These are very generally and abundantly distributed, some being peculiar to alpine regions, and others, though common in the lowlands, yet here attaining a greater development. Of course it is only a very few species of the 300 or more which the district contains, that we can at present enumerate, but amongst these will be found several most attractive to the muscologist. Of the *Jungermannia*, the connecting link between the true mosses and the lower forms of flowering plants, *J. juniperina*, *J. umbrosa*, *J. Doniana*, *J. planifolia*, *J. Orcadensis*, *J. Taylora*, and one or two others, are the rarer forms, confined almost exclusively to the precipices and corries of Loch Aun, Cairntoul, and the Dhuloch. Of mosses, properly so called, the following more characteristic, amongst many other interesting species, occur:—*Andræa nivalis* (Snowy andræa), not very frequent on the rocks of the higher mountains; *Phascum subulatum* (Awl-leaved earth-moss), occasionally in the wet moors, as at Morrone and Craig Coinnoch; *Gymnostomum tenue* (Slender beard-

less-moss), here and there, as on rocks at the Quoich and a ravine above the Linn of Dee; *Seligeria pusilla* (Dwarf bristle-moss), rare, on rocks by the streams at Morrone and in Glen Ey; *Dicranum majus* (Tall fork-moss), not common, at Corriemulzie and the Muic; *D. Starkii* (Stark's F. M.), pretty frequent about the sunmits of the higher mountains, with its variety, *molle*, on Lochnagar and the upper hills of Glen Callater; *Anacalypta latifolia* (Bulb-leaved lidless-moss), not very rare, in crevices of rocks at Loch Kandor, Muic, and Ben-naboord; *Encalypta commutata* (Sharp-leaved extinguisher-moss), and *E. streptocarpa* (Spiral-pointed E. M.), are both but seldom met with—the former upon the rocks of the corries, and the latter upon old mortared walls and bridges; *Tortula tortuosa* (Twisting screw-moss), pretty frequent, but rare in fruit, in which condition it is found about Morrone; *Grimmia atrata* (Black-tufted grimmia), very rare, on the rocks at Kandor, Craigandal, and Cairntoul; *Orthotrichum speciosum* (Showy bristle-moss) and *O. Drummondii* (Drummond's B. M.), are both occasionally found on the birch and rowan at Corriemulzie, Linn of Quoich, and Craig Cluny; *Bauxbaumia aphylla* (Leafless B.), here and there on boulders throughout the district, and amongst other mosses in crevices of rocks, as at Kandor, but difficult to detect; *Polytrichum sexangulare* (Northern hair-moss), amongst rocks and boulders on the higher mountains, but not abundant; *Bryum polymorphum* (Variable thread-moss), rare, on the wet slopes of the corries along with *B. Ludwigii* (Ludwig's T. M.), which is apparently still more uncommon; *Mnium cinclidoides* (Large-leaved thread moss), in the marsh at Loch-an-eun; and farther up on the rocks above it, *M. nitida* (Shining T. M.), both very rare; *Bartramia calcarea* (Thick-nerved apple moss), not common, on the hills at the head of Glen Callater and those of Glen Ey. Various species of *Splachnums* (Collar-moss) are abundant

everywhere throughout the district upon decaying matter on the mountains, of which *S. vasculosum* and *S. serratum* are the least common, though spread over a wide range; *Ædipodium Griffithianum* (G.'s alpine collar-moss), rather rare, in crevices of the rocks about Loch Kandor and the neighbourhood; *Hypnum molle* (Soft feather-moss), and *H. Articum* (Artic F. M.), are found occasionally in alpine streams on the Lochnagar and Cairngorm groups; while *H. sarmentosum* (Twiggy F. M.), and *H. rugosum* (Rugose F. M.), are rare upon the wet alpine rocks in the corries of the same ranges.

Such is but a mere tithe of the mosses of Braemar, and bears but a small proportion to the number even of the rarer species, but to those who take an interest in the now common and fashionable study of this class of plants, it will serve to give some idea of the richness of the district in this respect, and a clue to the others which they may expect to find therein.

2. *Lichens*.—Braemar presents an extensive and attractive field for the study and collecting of this more neglected but not less interesting order of cryptogamies, which here find their maximum development alike on aged tree, on bleak moorland, and on bleached boulder. As with the mosses, so here also we can enumerate but a few of the more characteristic, amongst which may be mentioned—*Cornicularia jubata* (Tree hair), very abundant on the fir, but apparently rare in fruit, in which condition I have only twice found it upon birch at Morrone; *C. bicolor*, a prostrate variety, is plentiful amongst mosses both on the ground and on stones of the higher mountains; *Cetraria Islandica* (Iceland moss), everywhere on the mountains, and the larger form in beautiful fructification towards the summits of Ben-naboord and Cairntoul, but requiring considerable search to discover; *C. Nivalis*, common on all the higher mountains, frequently in large patches on the ground, or amongst stones, but never with apothecia;

C. glauca, very abundant on trees and rocks, but exceedingly rare in fruit, two tufts in this state being all I have found in the district; *Neophroma resupinatum*, pretty frequent on old trees, as at Morrone, Lion's-face, Glen Muic, occasionally with very large apothecia; *Peltigera venosa*, not common, in crevices of rocks, as at Dhuloch and Craig Coinnoch; *P. aphthosa*, on moist rocks amongst mosses throughout the district, and occasionally in fruit on Craig Coinnoch and Lion's-face; *Solorina crocea*, rare on the rocks towards the tops of the corries of Lochnagar, Dhuloch, and Cairntoul; *S. saccata*, not unfrequent in shady crevices of the rocks, and plentiful in fruit, by the largest stream in the wood of Morrone, and on Craig Coinnoch. The different British species of *Gyrophoras* are everywhere abundant on walls, rocks, and boulders; and amongst them the rare *G. erosa* may occasionally be found in fruit. One or two kinds of *Stictas*, or lungworts, are occasionally to be seen upon very old trees, but never with apothecia; *Parmelia fahlunensis*, with its varieties, *stygia*, *tristis*, and *lanata*, is very frequent on all the higher mountains; *P. hypnorum*, common amongst various mosses on the ground and on walls; *Lecanora hæmatomma*, not very common, as on the Panannich cliffs and Morrone; *Lecidea lugubris*, a rare and but recently discovered British lichen, here and there amongst boulders in the moor at Morrone, and occasionally on old walls; *Cladonia vermicularis*, common on all the hills, but with no trace of any fructification. If any lingering doubt should still exist as to the *Leprarias*, it may here be speedily solved, as they may be seen in every stage of development, from a fine powder to an incipient thallus; though many, in all probability, never come to maturity, from the dark and damp situations in which they grow.

III. *Algæ*. The district, while making a tolerably respectable, yet makes no great figure in regard to its fresh-

water algæ. The waters of the streams are far too rapid, and those of the lochs far too clear, in almost every instance, for their growth; while there are scarcely any stagnant pools on the moors and mosses of long enough continuance in which they might be developed. A few, however, of the larger species, may here and there be found amongst the streams and tarns of the slaty rocks, which are generally more muddy in some places than those of the granite; while of the smaller varieties, which frequent small pools, wells, rills, and damp places in the corries, a much larger harvest may be gathered. We can only mention a very few, such as *Lemania fluviatilis*, not uncommon in the lower parts of many of the streams; *Batrachospermam vagum*, occasionally amongst the waters of the bogs and tarns, a very beautiful species; *Cladophora glomerata*, in streams and wells, on stones and sticks, as at Morrone, but variable in appearance; *Vaucheria dichotoma*, in pools and ditches, apparently very generally diffused to a great height; *Rivularia viridis*, an alpine variety, of the common form not uncommon in several of the streams, as at Craigandal and Glen Callater; *Oscillatoria rupestris*, pretty frequent on wet shelving rocks at Lochnagar and elsewhere; *Nostoc sphaericum*, abundant in some localities on slaty stones in the mountain rivulets. In addition to these, and various others of similar character, numerous rare and beautiful species of microscopical *Diatoms* and *Desmidiæ* may be everywhere found on wet dripping rocks, pools, marshes, and spring wells, throughout the district, to an altitude of nearly 4000 feet; some of them delighting to grow amidst the waters which come from the melting snows. The former is locally characterised by the abundance of the genus *Eunotia*, and the latter by that of the genus *Cosmarium*, both of which have a more extensive range than the others. But the species of algæ which will be most interesting alike to tourist and algologist, is *Protococcus nivalis* (the red snow plant), which is so

abundant in the Arctic regions, and which is here occasionally met with, especially during the summer of 1860, when the snow lay in large patches upon all the higher mountains.

IV. *Fungi*. Of these it may truly be said that in Braemar their name is legion, and their distribution universal. Late in autumn they are everywhere to be met with in the woods, the pastures, the moors, the hills;—some of them growing on the ground amidst grass and moss, most of them parasitic on dead twigs and animal droppings; some of them lasting throughout the year, but most of them decaying in a few days; some of them large and beautiful, most of them small and ugly; a few of them edible, but many of them deadly poison; a few of them useful as scavengers of the ground, but many of them injurious to the cereal crops and trees. Wherever we go through the forests and pastures, we will meet with numerous, and, in some instances, beautiful species of *Agarics* and *Boleti* amongst the grass, with here and there one or two curious *Pezizas* on dead fallen leaves and twigs upon the ground; while a host of *Sphærias*, *Thelephori*, and *Polypori* are seen on decaying wood and branches, as well as numerous *Uredos* corroding the living leaves of the trees and shrubs, with representatives of various other genera in their relative situations. But perhaps the most interesting of all are the common mushroom, *Agaricus campestris*, which serves as a sauce to our Highland mutton when we sit down to dinner;—the fairy ring, composed of *Agaricus oreades* arranged in a circle, which here and there still marks the spot where in days of yore, before they took their flight across the seas, the “good folks” danced all night in the bright moonlight; the beautiful snowy mushroom, *Agaricus nivalis*, which we may occasionally meet as we wander on the ridges of the highest mountains, where the snow has but recently melted.

So much then for the Flora of Braemar, which, alike

to the scientific and the practical botanist, presents so much that is rare and attractive. Hence it has been very much frequented by both : the former coming more for the purpose of observing than collecting, content to carry away but a few specimens ; the latter coming for the sole purpose of making a wholesale collection of all he can find, again to retail to fireside amateurs. Accordingly, several of the rarer plants which were found a few years ago, are now almost, if not altogether, extirpated from the localities then known ; and it seems a sin against the shade of Linnæus to point out the few situations elsewhere, in which a few may yet be found. Betwixt the two, however, the tin japanned vasculum is well known in Braemar, and the botanist's pride will not here suffer such a severe shock as mine has occasionally elsewhere done, by being taken for a travelling pedlar, and asked by some old maid, whose god was the Chinese beverage, " I'st tay your sellin' i' your canister ?" *Anglicè*, " Is it tea you have for sale in your box ?" Hear ye this, O Hooker, Arnott, Greville, Balfour, *et hoc genus omne*, and say, is not the schoolmaster, as far as botanical apparatus is concerned, verily far abroad in this boasted nineteenth century ?

CHAPTER VII.

ZOOLOGY — VERTEBRATE AND INVERTEBRATE ANIMALS.

THE Zoology of Braemar is much more extensive and diversified than, from the elevated situation of the district and the consequent coldness of the climate, one would at first be inclined to think. The forests, the mountains, the streams, and moors, are each characterised by various interesting forms of animal life, several of which are nowadays rather uncommon in Britain, and several of which we would willingly dispense with from the braes of Mar. Wild beasts and rapacious birds, banished entirely from lowland districts, are here occasionally seen in the more out-of-the-way recesses of the forests and crags; carrying us back in imagination to the olden times, when the wolf and the boar were hunted by our barbarian ancestors; when the eagle carried off the young of the flocks, and the falcon was trained for the chase. Noxious reptiles, too, which once formed part of the ingredients flung by the weird hags into Satan's broth-pot, are common on the heaths, while hosts of various annoying insects, not inaptly called mosquitoes by the best read natives, which even the fumes of the strongest Virginian weed cannot keep at a respectable distance, torment us as we pass through or sit down in the woods. Nor are the gentler and prettier representa-

tives of the animal kingdom at all uncommon ; and in the proportion of Scottish species which it contains, it makes a very creditable appearance, indeed, when compared with any other district of similar extent. In both respects the naturalist, were he allowed to use his gun, could make a fine collection of the larger species for his museum, even as, by employing his eyes natural and artificial, he may fill his cabinet with the smaller forms of animal life. To give anything like a complete list of the Fauna of Braemar, would, for our present purpose, be as much out of place as it would take up too much room. Accordingly we shall refer only to the more characteristic of the different tribes in the various situations in which they are to be met with, noticing briefly any peculiarity of their habits, appearance, and distribution.

I. *Quadrupeds*.—Passing over the Celtic race of “Homo Sapiens,” indigenous to the district ; the Saxon race, which has now become naturalised therein ; and the hybrids formed by their intermixture,—all bipeds without feathers or tails, we at once proceed to another, I had almost said *inferior*—quadrupedal class of animals—viz. *Deer*. Of this there are two species in Braemar—the red and the roe deer—to test the skill of the sons of Nimrod, and the qualities of the Enfield rifle at long range. The *red deer*, which frequents the hills and forests in large herds of several hundred individuals, is by far the more esteemed, both for the quality of its flesh and the excitement of its chase, and in size and general appearance is a much nobler animal than the other. The most striking characteristic in its physical structure, is the antlers which adorn the head of the stag ; varying in number according to its age, and in size according to external circumstances. Though it has degenerated very much during the last century, still it is unquestionably the noblest animal of the chase ; exceedingly difficult to approach within shooting distance ;

and, when only slightly wounded, leading its pursuer and the hounds a long weary race o'er hills and moors, and when at length overtaken by the leaden messenger of death, dies as it had lived—*game*. The *roe deer*, though more elegantly formed, is much inferior in size of body—in quality of flesh—as well as in the number and height of the horns of the buck, to the former. It is never seen in large herds, but in small families of about six individuals, and confines itself to the woods and thickets, never venturing upon the hills, and is usually shot in its haunts, where it reposes during the day. When alarmed, it bounds and leaps along, over walls, fences, and ditches, with an agility far surpassing that of the red deer; and to those who have never seen it in full flight, almost incredible. But there is a probability that in some dark craggy recess of the forest or hills, we may get a glimpse of another kind of animal, which we do not so much care about, and to which we would rather give a pretty wide berth—viz. the *wild cat*,—much larger than the domestic species, of a yellowish grey colour, banded with black, very fierce when brought to bay, hissing, spitting, and screaming at its antagonist. It is, however, far from being common—thanks to the exertions of the gamekeepers, who contrive to keep them down, and in all probability will soon succeed in extirpating them altogether. This is the case also with the *badger*, locally termed the Brock, which was once a common animal in the district, but has now become very rare. Though retaining all its well-known obstinate valour when attacked by dogs, it commits no depredations whatever upon man, and therefore scarcely deserves the wholesale destruction which it has suffered at his hands. But we must not overlook an animal of frequent occurrence, and which, for a wonder, we will meet with in our rambles in the woods and glens—viz. the *fox*—Reynard of fable and song—whose character and habits have pointed many a moral, and whose deeds of daring

in the poultry-yard have adorned many a tale. Though very destructive to the game, it has still managed to maintain a pretty flourishing existence, by sleeping the hours of day away in its burrow, and taking its constitutional walk in the evening, for exercise and refreshment. In quiet places by the side of the larger streams and rocks, we may probably disturb an *otter* out fishing for his dinner, and send him swimming away as fast as he can to his retreat. Though very destructive to salmon, and consequently obnoxious to the gamekeepers, they are still pretty frequently to be met with, though their presence is not generally seen but heard by their retreating splash in the pool. On the banks beside it, the *water vole* has its long winding burrow, and in a fine summer evening may be observed quietly taking its grassy supper, and washing it down with a sip of Adam's wine. And, what may be interesting to Lowlanders, the *black rat* may occasionally be seen in the neighbourhood of the houses, but is being rapidly superseded in the lower parts of the district by its foreign brown cousin from Norway. The *grey hare*, on the mountains and upland moors, so variable in colour at different seasons of the year, is far more abundant and generally distributed than the common hare; while *rabbits*, not very many years ago unknown in the locality, have now so increased and multiplied in spite of traps and guns, as to become in some places a perfect nuisance to the farmer.

II. *Birds*.—First amongst the feathered tribes is the bird of Jove—the *golden eagle*—once very common in Braemar, but now very rarely seen, and never breeding in the district. One or two individuals hovering about the precipices of the Cairngorm and Lochnagar groups, are all the yearly records of their appearance by the gamekeepers for some time past, so that it is a wonder if the mere passing Tourist should have the good fortune to get a glimpse of the king of birds in Braemar. Various species of *hawks*, the falcon, kite, merlin, and

kestrel, may frequently be seen circling round their nests on the lofty crags, or soaring high up in the air on the look-out for prey, or darting through the trees after some screaming destined victim. The *raven*, once very common, bids fair to share the same fate as the eagle. All its proverbial sagacity has not been able to protect it from a relentless persecution and approaching extermination. As yet, however, it may be occasionally seen, and its croak heard amongst the rocks in the more sequestered glens and ravines. The *rook* and the *hooded crow* are frequently startled in the forests—the one in its search for slugs and worms, and the other while making a repast upon the eggs of other birds—and, slowly rising, fly heavily off to the top of the tallest trees. In the still evening may occasionally be heard the hooting of the *tawny* and *screech owls*, as they waken up from the sleep of day, and prepare to start in search of mice and beetles, filling us with melancholy forebodings, even in this matter-of-fact age. But a livelier sight may frequently be witnessed, and sweeter sounds heard, during the day in the flocks of beautiful *titmice* and *kinglets*, which we frequently behold in the pine-woods, incessantly active, climbing the branches, and hanging from the twigs, prying into every crevice, and inspecting every leaf of the firs in search of their insect food, and all the time from morn till night singing a short but pleasant song, and breaking the deep monotony of the many voices of external nature issuing from wimpling burns and falling waters. On the summits of the highest mountains may occasionally be met a *snow-bunting* or a *dotterel*, both at one time very abundant on all the hills, but now from some unaccountable reason comparatively rare, and consequently all the more interesting. Along the banks of the streams where the rowan-tree grows, pretty large flocks of the *mountain thrush* occur, which have descended from their nests amongst the stones on the hill-sides, to feed upon the red berries,

of which they are very fond. The *crossbill* is not unfrequent in the pine-woods, and is always too intent upon splitting the cones in search of seeds, to be easily disturbed by the passer-by. The *pine grosbeak*, met with by Pennant in the Invercauld woods, supposed to have been seen at Corriemulzie by Dr M'Gillivray, as well as once or twice at a distance by myself near the Bridge of Dee, has never apparently been killed in the district. On the moors the *red grouse* is plentiful up to a considerable height, where it is displaced by the *grey ptarmigan* with its changing plumage, which may frequently be seen on the very summits of the highest mountains. Occasionally, up to the Linn of Dee, the *siskin* is found in small flocks, feeding upon the cones of the alder by the streams, and the birch in the woods. All the way on to the higher wooded glens may be heard the notes of the *cuckoo*, though the bird itself is but seldom seen, intermingled in the lower tracts with the cooing of the *wood pigeon*, which is very rare above Balmoral. As we drive along the moor of Dinnet, we cannot fail to take notice of the number of *peewits* which occur there, as well as in several of the higher glens. Various of the birds which gladden our eyes and cheer our hearts in the crowded smoky city, such as the *sparrow* and *robin*, will here occasionally show their welcome presence, and be hailed by us as familiar acquaintances; while, as the *linnet's* or *blackbird's* song breaks upon our ears, we are apt to fancy we recognise the notes and see the forms of those captive individuals which we left in their cages at home singing as merrily as well-fed prisoners can be expected to sing. Swimming across, or flying heavily above some of the lochs, may be seen various species of aquatic birds, such as the *heron*, the *goose*, the *wild duck*, and *gull*, though scarcely ever in sufficient numbers to relieve with their white plumage their dark waters.

III. *Reptiles*.—Of these, the one most likely to be in-

teresting to the Lowlander is the *adder*, which is frequent on the dry moors and in the birch-woods, but luckily is only accidentally met with, as the sound of a footfall will send it gliding away. The usual size of this venomous reptile is about 18 inches, and it seldom attains more than a length of 2 feet, though one or two instances are on record in which it has been found much larger. Dogs and sheep are frequently bitten by its fangs, but human beings are scarcely ever heard of being so, since it never attacks except when attacked or trodden on accidentally. The effects of a bite from the adder vary in different individuals; but the best remedy in every case is the application of plenty of olive oil, previously heated at the fire. Closely allied to the adder, at least in its serpentine shape, is the *slow-worm*, which is frequently seen in many places, basking in the sunshine during summer. Though avoided by the country people, and generally supposed by them to be as dangerous as the preceding, it is in reality a harmless reptile, belonging to the lizard tribe, feeding upon slugs and insects, and committing none of those fell crimes which are usually laid to its charge. When struck by a stick it has a singular custom of snapping itself in two, and gliding away, leaving one part jumping and leaping in convulsions behind. Another reptile, which is held in equally bad repute with the preceding, is the *lizard*, an elegant, active creature, found upon all the dry heaths, and rejoicing in the heat of the noonday sun, as it darts hither and thither through the grass and ling. Like the slow-worm, it possesses the same curious property of snapping off its tail when seized, so that it is scarcely possible to capture a perfect specimen. The *water-newt*, or eft, whose character has also been wantonly blackened by the superstitious, and which is held in even greater abhorrence by the more ignorant than the viper, is common in all the pools along the Dee, and here and there in its tributaries. It is a beautiful and harmless reptile,

feeding upon worms, and incapable of doing even the slightest injury either to man or beast.

IV. *Fishes*.—Braemar is characterised more by the utility than by the variety of its “finny tribes;” but still it affords very good sport, and a pretty reasonable amount of satisfaction to the angler. *Salmon* generally ascend the Dee about the month of April, and *grilse* in the middle of June, and are taken during the season in considerable numbers, both in the river and in the larger streams, as well as in Loch Callater. Their usual weight is eight or nine pounds, though occasionally very considerably beyond this. The salmon here seem of late years to have deteriorated very much both in numbers and quality, owing to their wholesale capture on the sea-coast by means of stake-nets and the numerous fishings lower down the river, which render their escape to the streams of the “children of the mist” a very difficult matter. The *common trout*, of different sizes and varieties, is found in all the streams and lochs except the more inaccessible. They are generally more brightly coloured in the streams north of the Dee than in those on the south, and weigh from three up to twelve pounds, according to the locality in which they have been found. In some of the upper tarns there are no trout whatever, as they are unable to ascend the rapids; while in others they have been introduced, and are thriving better than could be expected. *Pike* of large size and good quality are everywhere found in quiet pools of the Dee, and occasionally in the larger tributaries. In Loch Callater they were at one time found of very large size, and in great quantity; but as they proved very destructive to the salmon, their numbers have of late years been very much reduced. The little pugnacious *stickleback* is found only in pools and brooks below Ballater; while the river *lamprey* may be seen at anchor amongst the stones, with its mouth sucking them like a leech, to a considerable distance above Castleton; and shoals of

minnows, by the sides of the streams, are common everywhere throughout the district—darting away in frightened crowds at our noisy footsteps amongst the stones, or at our shadow falling on the quiet pool in which they lie.

V. *Mollusca*.—Of these the locality possesses but very few, and these by no means abundant. The water of the streams is far too rapid, and that of the lochs far too destitute of vegetation, for aquatic species; while the climate of the woods and glens seems far too severe for the development of terrestrial forms. The *pearl mussel*, rarely met with in muddy or gravelly places of the Dee, though not unfrequent farther down; the *oval-lid shell*, here and there upon stones in the more muddy streams; the *wandering mud shell*, and its smaller brother, upon boulders in still water; the *bubble shell*, the common *pisidium*, and the *contorted coil shell*, occasionally in ditches and pools of the Dee,—are apparently all the varieties of water mollusca to be met with in the locality. Nor will the list be much extended when the land species of this class are added. The large *black slug*, whose horns are appealed to as a herald of fine weather in the well-known children's song, may everywhere be met with up to an elevation of about 2000 feet; while the common *grey slug*, in less numbers, accompanies it nearly all the way. Three of the larger snails may occasionally be seen travelling with their house upon their back—viz. the *spotted snail*, the largest of the genus, in old gardens; the *single-banded snail*, chiefly on the grassy sides of the streams, to a considerable height; and the *garden snail*, which is seen only, and that rarely, in the lower tracts of the district. A few of the smaller species, as the *green glassy snail*, the *radiated zone shell*, the *glossy zua*, found amongst grass, moss, and stones, in various parts, complete the scanty list, which, poor as it is, yet makes a very favourable appearance with any other Highland locality.

VI. *Insects*.—This class certainly presents a far different appearance, as represented in Braemar, from the last, both in interest and in numbers. To give only a mere list of even the more common species would fill a goodly sized volume, while to read it, would not only put the ordinary tourist asleep, but would also weary the more scientific. All therefore that we can do, and all probably for which we would be thanked, is to notice a very few of the more interesting in the different entomological departments. Amongst the more characteristic *Beetles*, which are very abundant, may be mentioned—*Cicindela campestris*, a very beautiful insect, of a green colour, with six whitish spots, which on a bright sunny day we may frequently perceive flying, or at rest upon the dry sandy heaths; *Carabus glabratus*, entirely black in colour, found amongst stones on the summits of the highest mountains, presenting a very different appearance to *Carabus nitens*, which is very rare upon the heaths in the lower parts, and, in its lustrous metallic splendour, is one of the finest of Coleopterous insects; *Dytiscus punctulatus* may here and there be seen in quiet deep pools, resting on the surface of the water to get its breath, or hovering by the margin to catch its prey; *Gyrinus natator*, the well-known whirligig, common in quiet water, swimming merrily in its black jacket all day long upon the surface; *Geotrupes stercorarius*, popularly called the watchman, a large black beetle with fine metallic hues beneath, may often, in a fine summer evening when the sun is set, be seen wheeling its drowsy flight, and when touched falling down and counterfeiting death; *Hylobius abietis*, along with various other species of allied genera which are lovers of forest scenery, are frequent in fir-woods, the larvæ living in the old stems, and the perfect insect reposing on the leaves, except when abroad in the fields. But we must pass on to mention a few of the *Lepidopterous* insects, which, along with

the preceding, are most likely to attract the tourist. These, in their two great familiar divisions of butterflies and moths, are much more abundant, if not varied, than one would expect them to be in such an elevated district. The butterfly we will meet with most frequently is the *tortoiseshell*, or, as it is called in Scotland, "The Devil's butterfly," which is everywhere very common in the neighbourhood of gardens and deserted houses where there are nettles upon which its larvæ can feed. In the same situations occur also the varieties of the *cabbage butterfly*, flitting from flower to flower, though in much less numbers than in lower districts. The small *blue butterfly* is frequent about the pastures, flying so swiftly and resting so shortly as almost to defy capture; and along with it may also be seen the common *copper butterfly* vying with it in its active restless motions, and having a wider range. In the shrubberies about Abergeldie the *orange-tip*, or lady of the woods, rare in this part of Scotland, is occasionally met with attired in her rich but modest robe; while the more gorgeous *peacock butterfly* is less seldom seen in similar situations, and only in a very warm summer. On the lower heaths the common *fritillary*, with the silvery lustre of its under-wings, is abundant, flitting amongst the blossoms of the ling, and enlivening the moor with its presence. The *emperor moth* is not uncommon, and may be seen at dusk darting rapidly through the trees, and the empty cocoon of its chrysalis is often found upon the heather. The large and splendid *tiger moth* is by no means rare upon the ground in the neighbourhood of walls, while its caterpillar, locally known by the name of the "hairy worm," is abundant. About shrubberies where the plant grows from which it derives its name may be seen the *privet moth*, especially in the lower tracts. Still more rare is the *puss moth* in similar situations, the curious, and, to the uninitiated, the hideous caterpillar of which I have once

or twice met with. In gardens the *currant* or *maggie moth* is frequent, and the larvæ as destructive here as elsewhere to the currant and gooseberry bushes, though it is seldom seen so far up as Castleton. Various species of the smaller moths are common everywhere in the woods, and upon the moors both during the day and in the evening twilight. Of the other classes of insects, the *grasshopper* is abundant on the heaths, and some of them of large size; the *dragon-fly*, frequent by the streams, in the forests, and darting like lightning through the trees; the *brown ant*, everywhere common in the pine-woods, forming hillocks of large size, and ever active in laying up its winter's provisions; *spiders*, of various kinds, on the trees and amongst stones—even up to the summits of the highest mountains; various species of gnats and midges by every rill of water in forest and woodland—perfect torments to the tourist alike when he walks and sits down to rest.

But enough has been said to give some general idea of the different departments of the zoology of the district, which it will be perceived is in many respects very interesting. And though the naturalist will not be permitted to use his gun in securing specimens of the larger animals, yet he will have full liberty to use his entomological apparatus in obtaining the smaller but not less attractive class of insects. Having thus briefly glanced at the natural history of Braemar, as exemplified in its rocks, its flora, and its fauna, we shall now be far better prepared to take a series of excursions through the district and mark what we perceive in regard both to its general scenery and productions with a more intelligent eye, and find much to instruct and delight us in forest and stream, on hill and moor.

PART III.

EXCURSIONS IN BRAEMAR.



CHAPTER VIII.

FROM CASTLETON TO BALLATER PER COACH.

CASTLETON being nearly in the centre of the district, is consequently the best place from which to start to visit the *lions* of Braemar. Our first excursion thence shall be to Ballater, leaving with the early coach in order that we may get back again in time for dinner. We rise at half-past five on an autumn morning, and, looking out at the window, perceive that everything promises a beautiful day, although the mist is lingering on the tops of the higher mountains. Dressing as quickly as possible, and taking a hasty breakfast, we make our way to the inn, from which the coach—licensed to carry four inside and sixteen outside—starts at a quarter-past six. Of course we take third class, and have just time to mount and seat ourselves when the driver jumps up, reins in hand, whistles, cracks his whip, and we are off. If you can manage to get beside him, Othello's occupation will be so far gone, and you will have less need of me to point out the different localities. But it is a great chance if you do so at this season of the year, unless you had secured your seat on the previous day; and therefore you had better take me with you. We scarcely, in seating ourselves, get time to look at our fellow-passengers, who are from every part of Britain, and often from countries much more distant; and it would betray a very unaccommodating disposition to attempt counting

their numbers for the sake of discovering why we have so little room. It is a very pleasant drive we have before us, on one of the best, if not the very best road in Scotland; and we need to use our eyes, and concentrate our whole attention, upon matters far more interesting than trying to solve whether that gent with the beard and mustache be a cockney or a foreigner, or how many feet beyond the regular number that lady occupies with her crinoline.

Looking before us as we leave the village, we see that the lower hills are quite clear, with the sun shining brightly upon them, and all nature wearing a smiling face, and rejoicing in its life-giving rays. Yonder, amongst the trees at the eastern end of the Invercauld Arms Inn, the Earl of Mar, on the 6th September 1715, erected the standard of the so-called King James VIII. of Scotland, and marched forth with the clans and the braw lads o' the Braes o' Mar, to recover the kingdom, and restore the exiled Prince to the throne which his father had justly lost. Thence, descending the gently sloping brae, we pass first, on the left, the parish *Churchyard*, surrounded by a belt of planting which prevents us from seeing over the wall. We do not, however, lose much, as, with the exception of a square building in the centre, overgrown with ivy, in which several of the Invercauld family are buried, it possesses but little if any interest whatever, although several of the upper Strathdee lairds and local celebrities of the olden time lie here interred. Immediately after this, on the same side, we come to *Braemar Castle*, a high bare tower, on a gentle eminence, of no great beauty in itself, but with a splendid view of the plain of Castleton from the top. It was built by Government after the rising in 1715, on the ruins of an older structure; and a company of soldiers were stationed in it for many years, to overawe, by their presence, the Jacobite Highland lairds, and crush any smouldering embers of discontent that yet

remained. It is now in the possession of the Invercaulds, but is uninhabited and little frequented, except at the annual Braemar gathering in September, which takes place on the green sward in front, when the men of Invercauld and Fife muster, not for battle nor for raid, but to show their strength in putting the stone and throwing the hammer, and their agility in leaping and running, before royalty and strangers from all quarters. Far beyond, looking up Glen Candlic, we catch glimpses of the summits of Ben-na-boord and Ben Aun, crowned with large conspicuous blocks of stone, which at this distance appear like warts upon their bare brows. At some distance farther on, half-concealed amidst the trees, we may perceive the white front of *Altowrie Cottage*, the residence of the factor for Invercauld—a very neat building, in a fine situation. On the right, we now come to *Craig Coinnoch*, or Kenneth's Crag, called after the Scottish king of the same name, by whom, when he came to hunt in the royal forest of Mar, it was occasionally used as a heading hill. From the village it is a rather picturesque granitic hill, but on this side it is planted all the way up with trees of various kinds, through which we can only here and there perceive that it is steep and craggy. Continuous with it is a romantic bare mass of micaceous rock, covered with bright yellow leprarias, called the *Lion's Face*, very much frequented by visitors to Castleton for the sake of the magnificent prospect which it affords, and generally considered, from some points, to bear a considerable resemblance to the object from which it takes its name, though the trees with which its lower portion is covered are getting rather high, and somewhat obscuring its features. It is scarcely distinct from the next higher and longer ridge, *Craig Cluny*, which, however, is of granite, with lofty precipices on its sides, covered with weeping birch, rowan, and tall pines, with large fallen blocks of stone on which grow a great variety of mosses and lichens, strewn along

its base, some of which, as the one called the *Big Stone* of Cluny, which we afterwards see on the opposite side of the road, are of large dimensions, and have rolled to a considerable distance. Amongst the rocks at the steep slope towards the upper extremity of the hill, is a recess about a third of the way up, called the *Charter-Chest*, from the title-deeds and other valuable papers of Invercauld having been deposited for safety therein after the Rebellion—and certainly they were in a secure enough place.

On the left, all the way on from the Lion's Face, we get beautiful peeps through the trees of *Invercauld House*, on the other side of the Dee, the seat of the Farquharsons, the only survivors, though on the female side, of the old families of Braemar still in possession of their ancestral estates. The building, which contains ample accommodation, is an irregular but romantic-looking pile, erected at different periods, surrounded with scenery of the grandest description, magnificently situated on a natural terrace, forming by far the finest site for a mansion upon the whole of Deeside—with a green lawn in front, sloping down to the water, studded here and there with clumps of trees, while a low range of hills behind, covered with dark pine, form an admirable background to a mansion which, for external beauty and internal happiness, can nowhere be surpassed, either at home or abroad. The view from the house is almost unrivalled, reaching from the corrie of Ben-na-board to that of Lochnagar, and bounded in front by steep romantic crags, clothed with living verdure, at the base of which the sparkling river wends merrily on its way. Farther on we pass *Cluny Cottage*, on the same side, a very pretty red-coloured building, inhabited by the chief forester of Invercauld, with a pond amid the shrubbery near the entrance, in which grow a number of cultivated aquatic plants. Immediately beyond this, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Castleton, we come to the *New Bridge of Dee*,

erected a few years ago—a very substantial granite structure, but not so romantic in itself, nor affording such a beautiful prospect, as the old bridge, which we see still standing on the right, with the trees and bushes growing out of its sides, apparently but little the worse for having braved the storms and floods which have dashed against it for upwards of a century. Between them the river flows dark and rapidly, always in an angry mood, surging and foaming as it dashes its waters against the stones and boulders with which the channel is encumbered. The fine hill on our left, with the pines on its sides and the brown heathy top, is called *Meal Alvie*, and stretches along the road for a considerable distance. On the other side, we behold several of the northern ridges of Lochnagar, and, towering above them all, a portion of the highest peak of that mountain itself, which here, from its position, appears sharp and conical. But we have now reached a small, neat lodge, quite in keeping with the scene, though, since the new turnpike road was constructed, it has found itself on the wrong side. Here the coach for a moment stops to receive the letter-bag from Invercauld, the path to which enters at the gate on the left. The road on the right, through the *Balloch-buie*, which we now see in its whole extent, stretching away far up the hills in all directions, leads to Crathie and Ballater, along the south side of the river, and, though steep and rugged, contains finer scenery than that on which we are riding. It is now, however, shut up from the public as far as Crathie, that the privacy of Balmoral may be more complete—a laudable purpose, at which no loyal subject will grumble. There is still access for tourists along it to the celebrated *Falls of the Garrawalt*—a liberty which it is to be hoped they will use, and not abuse by straying from the path and wandering through the forest to disturb the deer.

We are at present prevented from visiting the falls in person, by having taken the coach; but as the scenery

through which we now for some distance drive is very similar, and presents no particular object to attract attention, we shall take the opportunity of visiting them in imagination. Entering at the lodge, we cross the old bridge, on which we stand for a moment to admire the fine view of hill, wood, and water which we thence obtain. A few steps brings us into the forest, and passing along we keep the lower road for about a quarter of a mile, admiring the noble pines which lend it its greatest glory—noticing, but not in wanton cruelty disturbing, some large ant-hills, which here are very numerous—and crossing two small streams. We then turn to the right, and hold straight on till we come to a narrow path, upon which we enter, on the same line with the one we have been traversing, which now goes eastward to Balmoral. The Garrawalt rushes beneath us in a rocky ravine, which gets deeper and deeper, and tumbles amongst boulders which become larger and more numerous as we proceed along the path. After some distance, it leads to the other side over a rustic wooden bridge, and then up to a neat fog-house, where we may seat ourselves for a moment and watch the turbulent stream surging and foaming, hissing and splashing along far down beneath us, presenting, after yesterday's rain, an almost unbroken series of rapids from the bridge we last crossed on to that one right ahead, beneath which it falls over a rounded shelving mass of granite into a black, boiling pool. Taken in connection with the surrounding scenery of the Balloch-buie, the Garrawalt is at all times, and especially when swollen, well worthy of a visit from the tourist; and though he may hesitate to call it, like Pennant, “the *great* cataract of Garvalburn,” yet the whole scene can scarcely fail to leave the same impression upon his memory as it did on that of the famous naturalist nearly a century ago, and which he so vividly and so correctly describes. But while we have been thus mentally visiting the mountain torrent on the

wings of imagination, we have been bodily carried along on the top of the coach past a road on the left leading up to Filegie and Aberarder, small clachans at the back of the hill at Invercauld, and through woods of pine clothed with birch on either side, catching occasional and beautiful glimpses of the river. Two miles from the bridge of Dee, we come to a gamekeeper's house, alongside of which runs the boundary betwixt the parishes of Braemar and Crathie. Outside of it, in a large wooden cage, may be seen a captive eagle, evidently far gone in consumption, pining for its eyrie on the mountain crag, and longing for one voyage more to the sun before it dies. Behind is a range of magnificent precipices, forming the south-east termination of Meal Alvie, the highest and most remarkable of which is termed the *Big Nose*, with numerous trees growing far up in the rifts and crevices.

Still onwards through woods of pine and larch, where the roe may often be seen vanishing amongst the trees, along a road remarkably smooth and level, with the river now concealed from our view, and the hills on either side a little further removed, till we reach the inn of *Inver*—a smaller and more commonplace-looking establishment than those at Castleton, but always full when the Queen is at Balmoral. Here again letters are received, the horses are watered, and the thirsty Highlander alights to get a taste of his native mountain-dew. The stoppage, however, is but short, and we have time just to call to mind the features of the magnificent and unrivalled scenery through which we have journeyed, and which now begins to change its character a little, when we are again driving along the road. We pass in succession a small burn which drives the wheel of a corn-mill by its side, from which we obtain the first peep of the tower of Balmoral—a toll-bar and two or three small houses beside it; and then, sweeping round the base of a high, rocky, wooded hill called *Craignordie*,

we perceive, on the other side of the river, amongst the trees, *Invergelder*, the home-farm of Balmoral, with two very handsome keepers' cottages, at the foot of the hill. A little farther on, we pass, amongst a small clump of trees by the water-side, a large heap of stones, with a flagstaff and vane, called *Cairn-aquhen* (the stone of remembrance), erected in memory of some of the Farquharson men who had been killed in battle—forming the old gathering-cry of Deeside when the fiery cross passed through the braes of Mar to muster the clans for warfare and for raid. We now come to a few small houses on either side of the road, called the *Street of Monaltrie*; and behind those, on the left, amongst the trees, may be seen a farmhouse built upon the remains of the old *House of Monaltrie*, which belonged to the Farquharsons of that ilk, a younger branch of the Invercaulds, and was burned down by the soldiers of the Government after the defeat at Culloden. Here also, in a clear day, a very fine view may be obtained of the eastern side of Lochnagar, although, from the distance, we cannot distinctly make out the magnificent range of precipices which characterise this part of the mountain.

A short way farther on, the *Palace of Balmoral* comes full into view, situated on a narrow strip of level ground on the south bank of the Dee, midway between Ballater and Castleton, being 9 miles equidistant from both. This magnificent and extensive pile of buildings, erected by his Royal Highness Prince Albert in 1854, on the site of the old castle, which was purchased from the Fife Trustees, and was far too small for the accommodation of the royal family and suite, is of the finest dressed granite, and though of a reddish colour, yet presents that clean appearance which is so characteristic of the stone, bidding defiance to rain or wind alike to stain or to corrode. See how unsullied it looks just now when the morning sun shines brightly upon it, and were you to visit it half a century hence, it might then indeed be

a shade darker, but still as uniformly clean and undecayed. But if you wish to see it in all its splendour you must come in a clear moonlight night, when it stands forth in white relief from the dark mass of the surrounding trees and the deep shadow of the neighbouring hills, and when the particles of mica which the stone contains sparkle like silver as the cold stones are kissed by the cold moonbeams. Some would-be connoisseurs have occasionally found fault with the site, and others with the building, considering them not to be in perfect keeping with each other. We do not, however, feel inclined to do so; for the site, though certainly inferior to that of Invercauld, is yet in every respect, both as regards salubrity and situation, most eligible; while the building itself, though not so imposing, from the large scale of the surrounding scenery, as otherwise it would be, seems equally adapted thereunto. If there is any want of harmony, it is such as no human skill could have avoided amidst these craggy hills, and only shows us how far inferior are the proudest buildings man can raise, to the mighty marvellous works of the great Architect of the universe. In its main features it is of the Scotch baronial style of architecture, but with many deviations therefrom, and many innovations thereupon, which are rather improvements than blemishes, in so far at least as greater comfort and accommodation are concerned. It thus partakes of the character of an ancient stronghold and a modern mansion. There are but comparatively few external carvings or mouldings, for which the stone, from its hardness, is by no means well adapted, but such as there are present an admirable chasteness of design and exquisiteness of workmanship. The large square tower, 100 feet high, with a fine clock, which regulates the time all over the district, is a very massive and ornamental structure, visible at a considerable distance, and having a magnificent view from the summit. The dining and drawing rooms, the billiard-

room, and the library, occupy the ground-floor, and above them are the royal apartments, the entrance to the whole being on the south. The private apartments of the Queen and Prince Albert are on the west—those of the Prince of Wales on the north—and those of the princesses on the south, all large and commodious, furnished with the greatest simplicity of style, but with the utmost purity of taste. The ball-room, which is remarkably neat and suitable for the purpose, is that lower portion which you see near the centre coming farther out towards the north than the rest of the castle. The other buildings on the north and east are set apart as offices and rooms for the officials and servants, and are all in the same plain style, but most convenient and appropriate. The grounds in the immediate vicinity are laid out with great skill and neatness, as is also the case with the garden, while various improvements are still going on in both. The picturesque hill at the back of the castle, wooded with birch almost to the very top, on which a large cairn is seen, is called *Craig-an-gowan*, and is frequently ascended by the royal family for the extensive prospect which it affords of the valley of the Dee from Craigandaroch to Invercauld bridge. Such, then, is all that we have time to say of Balmoral during the few minutes that we are driving more slowly past it, and the short stoppage while the horses are being changed a little farther down the road. If you wish to know more about it, you must obtain an order of admission from Dr Robertson of Indego, Prince Albert's commissioner on the estate.

But the coach again starts, and, passing a neat little cottage on the left, and the plain cast-iron bridge which leads to the lodge at the castle, and down the south side of the Dee to Ballater, we again stop at the post-office of Crathie, on the left, to receive the mail-bag, and let down a few passengers belonging to the locality, who have been up at Castleton on business. There is no village

of Crathie properly speaking, that which is commonly called so consisting merely of the said post-office, the school-house, and one or two others on the height, along which the highway formerly ran. But crack goes the whip, and once more we are off, passing on the same side at the foot of a stony hill, amongst a thicket of pine, the parish *Church of Crathie*—a neat building, but with nothing particularly attractive about its appearance, though it has of late been very much improved, both outside and inside. It claims its chief interest from the circumstance that there, in a humble Scottish kirk, with nothing to appeal to the senses, and no meretricious ornaments—destitute even of an altar or an organ—the Queen of the British dominions devoutly worships, with the humblest of her subjects, her and their Creator, her and their Redeemer: a noble example, which it would be well not only for the auld Kirk of Scotland, but also for Christianity at large, if all her nobles would imitate when they come to this country; a solemnising sight, which of itself should be sufficient to check all unseemly conduct on the part of those strangers who attend divine service therein. Nearly opposite is the manse, finely situated by the side of the river, with the churchyard rather awkwardly placed beside it; the hospitable owner of which would certainly require the best stipend in Scotland to enable him to keep an open table for the numerous guests who frequent it during the season. Beyond the Dee, which here again is crossed by a neat suspension-bridge, a little the worse of the tear and wear to which it was for years subjected, we catch glimpses of some very neat houses amongst the trees, termed the *Balmoral Cottages*; and at the back of yonder pine wood you can perceive the smoke from the far-famed *Lochnagar Distillery*, from which, if not a member of some Total Abstinence Society, you might do worse than order a gallon or two of genuine mountain-dew to keep your spirits up and your body warm during the winter. But

our eyes again wander back to Balmoral, seeking a parting glimpse thereof, to impress its features more vividly upon our memory ; and as we turn the corner which conceals it from our view, the words irresistibly flow from our lips—" Farewell, Balmoral ! May peace and prosperity be ever within thy walls."

We now for some distance drive through a rather uninteresting tract, having thick stunted birches on our right, evidently the remains of what was once an extensive wood, and the southern ridges of Glengairn on our left, bare, bleak, and stony, covered solely with blackish heather, although a considerable portion thereof was once under cultivation. About a mile and a half farther on, we come to *Abergeldie Castle*, belonging to the old family of the Gordons of that ilk—a fine-looking building, with a square turreted tower, having an air of greater antiquity than the rest of the structure—nicely situated on the river-side, which here is crossed by a singular contrivance, called a rope-and-cradle bridge. Had we been coming from Ballater, instead of going towards it, we would have seen one of the servants waiting for letters, and probably the obliging coachman would have waited a moment, to let us see how he got over the water on the cradle. There are umbrageous woods of birch stretching away in all directions ; and though not nearly so extensive nowadays as once they were, yet they sufficiently show how appropriately the fine old air of the " Birks of Abergeldie " was connected therewith. The castle, however, is best known from having been for several years the Highland residence in autumn of Her Royal Highness the late Duchess of Kent, whose memory will long survive in the neighbourhood, for the many noble though unostentatious acts of charity which she performed to the poorer inhabitants. The large rounded granitic hill covered with tall firs behind it, is called *Craig-naban*, and occupies a prominent place in the witchcraft lore of the district—a wizard having there, to save his

life, hunted down and delivered up to justice an unfortunate witch, who had for a long time been a torment to the district, after each of them had undergone various sudden and strange metamorphoses, as they changed themselves into different animals. But, before reaching Abergeldie, we must have noticed on our left a number of small scattered huts on the lower slope of the hills, and we may still see them at intervals, stretching on for some distance ahead of us. The name of the whole collection is *Micras*, Easter and Wester; but the inhabitants, from some bad odour attaching to the name, generally speak of it to strangers as the village opposite Abergeldie. It is certainly a genuine specimen of a Highland clachan of the days of yore—the houses being very rudely constructed, with but scanty room and scanty furniture inside. Many of them are now in ruins, and the site of others is now occupied by buildings of a much superior class, so that in a few years, as the old inhabitants die out, *Micras* will evidently be no longer what it once was. At its eastern portion we may perceive, near the road, the traces of the site of the old Catholic Chapel of *Micras*, marked by a large upright standing stone, which it is said, with every probability, formed part of an ancient Druidical temple, which existed there long before Christianity was introduced into Braemar by St Nathalan, its patron saint. The range of hills behind, consisting principally of granite, but with slate more or less intermixed, finds its highest peak in *Geallaig*—the white mountain—which you will recognise by the cairn upon its top. For a considerable way the road leads us alongside of the river, which rushes over a stony bed, gleaming in the bright sunshine like molten crystal.

We now enter the long birch wood of *Coille-Crich*, which stretches before us on both sides for upwards of two miles. The white silvery stems of the trees are very pretty, though rather fatiguing to the eye from their uniformity of appearance, and trying to the nerves, in a

dark night, from their spectral form. The hill on the other side of the river, which is now concealed from view, is called *Craig Youzie*—the rock of firs,—very rugged, though well wooded, and bearing a very marked resemblance to *Craigandarroch* at Ballater. On its eastern side, at the mouth of Glen Girnac, is seen beyond the dark pines the school-house of Girnac, which, along with several others in the district—all models, in every respect, of what a school ought to be—was erected, and is liberally supported, by the Queen. The hill on the east side of Girnac is called *Craig Phibe*, stretching far down the barren strath till it joins the green-topped hills of Coial. But we have now reached the inn and toll-bar of Coille-Crich—a small, unpretending building—where we again, for a moment, stop to water the perspiring horses. Looking back, we have a splendid view of Strathdee from above Crathie on to Ballater; and we seem to be placed in the middle of an amphitheatre surrounded on all sides by heathery and rocky hills, diversified with thickets and woods of pine and birch, looking very lovely indeed in this clear autumn day, when all asperities are softened down beneath the rays of the morning sun. The valley here is of considerable width, tolerably cultivated, and well wooded with pine, which now makes great inroads upon the birch. At length we reach the end of Coille-Crich, and again we have the bare hills of the mouth of Glengairn upon our left. The heath, however, on the moor beside us, is here occasionally varied by the bonnie yellow broom, which is not very common farther up the country, and is rarely seen above Balmoral. There is not much in our immediate vicinity to attract our attention, and we gaze forward to the hill of *Knock* upon our right, covered to the summit with fir beautifully dotted with birch, and *Craigandarroch*, the hill of oaks bounding the view before us, and separated from the lower flank of Morven by a deep, and, on the north side, perpendicular chasm, called the *Pass of Ballater*.

Passing the road leading up to Glengairn, we come to the new granite *Bridge of Gairn*—more substantial, but not nearly so romantic-looking as the old bridge which once spanned the rocks a short distance farther up the stream. The banks are here rocky and pretty high, ornamented with a few alders, rowans, and birches, and in one place clothed with a mass of ivy green—an unusual plant in the district. Two large farmhouses are on our right, with considerable fields of oats and turnips, and various smaller buildings upon our left. Down in the plain are the remains of the old parish church of Glengairn, with a burying-ground attached—the present church being situated farther up the glen, nearer to the great bulk of its population. After reaching the old coach road through the Pass upon our left, we begin to ascend the hill of Craigandarroch, with the river gliding on far beneath us at its base, and the oaks contrasting well with the dark firs of Knock on the opposite side. Looking back we may catch a glimpse of the corrie of Lochnagar, and, down Glen Muic, the serpentine hills of Coial are most conspicuous with their three prominences. But probably we will be more occupied with looking at a toy-like cottage on our left, locally known by the name of *Humphrey's Folly*, and wondering why such a site should have been chosen for such a delicate structure, or why, at all events, a small plantation was not made around it to afford it some shelter from the blasts of winter. A little farther on we pass the Free Kirk of Ballater—a small building, stuck up in the corner of a sand-bank, and bearing traces of fast hastening to decay. Thence we descend the hill by a very steep brae, most trying to the horses even though the drag is on, and reflecting but little credit on the skill and taste alike of the road trustees and the road surveyor. We are too frightened lest the coach should be overturned to look much about us, till we are again on the level ground, and the blue curling smoke from the houses of *Ballater*

comes into view. Speedily we reach the village, to which, from this side, the hills of Pannanich form an admirable background, and, passing the new police station and the church, stop for a few minutes at the post-office to deliver up the letter-bags, and then a couple of hundred yards brings us to the Invercauld Arms Inn, and our glorious drive of eighteen miles terminates, with just enough of Highland scenery around us to remind us that we are still in Braemar, and have not yet quite reached the Lowlands.

You may now take some refreshment if you require it, and then hire a machine and drive to the Falls of Muic, or the burn of the Vat ; or walk to the Wells of Pannanich, or through the Pass of Ballater. You will easily be back in time from any of these excursions to return to Castleton with the afternoon coach, which I recommend you to do in order that you may have all the advantage of prospect which ever results in ascending from the more tame to the more sublime. Meantime I bid you good morning, assured that the features of the magnificent scenery through which you have passed will never be obliterated from your memory, and trusting that you will be more ready than ever to adore the power, and wisdom, and goodness of the great Creator, who has fitted up this world with so much that is grand and lovely as a habitation for man.

CHAPTER IX.

FROM CASTLETON TO LOCHNAGAR ON FOOT.

THERE are very few visitors to Braemar, in full possession of the use of their lungs and limbs, who do not make a point of climbing dark Lochnagar, and gazing upon its steep frowning glories. It is about 12 miles distant from Castleton by Glen Callater, the more romantic though but slightly nearer road through the Ballochbuie being now shut up from the public. Six miles of the journey may be performed by gig, and the remainder by pony; but, assuming that you are a good pedestrian, we shall at present take shanks' mare and traverse it on foot. Leaving word to arouse us at six in the morning, that we may have plenty of time for our excursion, we retire to rest, in all probability repeating Byron's well-known poem before falling asleep. If we have taken anything like a heavy supper, we may depend upon it that we shall dream all night long of standing upon the summit of the mountain, by the wheels of winter's cold icy car, enveloped in mist, and beholding within a circle of clouds the shadowy forms of the ancestral Byrons. No wonder, then, that our slumbers should frequently be broken, and that we should fairly awaken of ourselves before the specified hour, just as in imagination we are tumbling headlong down its wild majestic crags. By seven o'clock we are ready to start; and, taking plenty

of provisions to sustain the stomach, and a good thick stick to support the limbs, and your japanned tin vasculum if you be a botanist, we open the door and inhale the caller morning air, which is all the more refreshing after yesterday's showers.

We proceed to the new road through Glen Cluny on the east side of the water, recently constructed by Mr Farquharson of Invercauld; and as we pass leisurely along it, we have a fine view of the hill of *Morrone* on the opposite side, extending continuously as far as we go in a southern direction, and from the top of which is a most magnificent prospect of Highland scenery, which every visitor to Braemar should make a point of beholding. Yonder, nestling itself most snugly amongst the trees in the birch plantation at its foot, is the farm of *Dalvrechachie*, the residence of the clergyman of the Established Church in Castleton. Above it, on the north-east brow of the hill, is *Tomantoul*, beneath those limestone rocks, surrounded with several fields of oats and turnips, and the highest cultivated land in Scotland, being about 1500 feet above the level of the sea. On the left we have the finely-wooded, and on this side sloping, hill of Craig Coinnoch, with a conspicuous cairn upon its top. On the low ground, betwixt us and the hill, is a fine curling pond, in connection with the Royal Caledonian Club, affording not merely an agreeable pastime to several of the inhabitants of Braemar, who are no mean proficient in the game, but also a great source of relief from ennui during the long Highland winter. There is little on the road, which is bounded on the left by a low range of micaceous hills, to attract our attention or detain our steps till we come to the farmhouse of *Achalater*, where the Callater joins the Cluny. Here we may pause for a moment, and look either back upon the road we have traversed, and bid farewell for a time to the trees, or forward along the stream to a low hill in which Glen Cluny from this point appears to termi-

nate. Crossing the Callater by a stone bridge, we turn to the left and enter the glen of that name, the existence of which, till once we are fairly in it, we would scarcely suspect. We pursue our way along a path which follows the course of the stream, bounded on both sides by a profusion of the Alpine lady's mantle, with the boulders everywhere covered with various dark heathery *gyrophoras*. And see what a beautiful object the thallus of *Lecidea geographica* is on that piece of quartz, appearing like a tree in miniature, with the most delicate twigs and branchlets! Yonder, by the stream, are one or two water-ousels searching vainly, we should think, for insects and their larvæ; and on the path before us an adder, disturbed by the sound of our footsteps, glides hastily away. The hills on our right and left here, and all the way onwards, are partly granitic and partly slaty, totally destitute of trees, frequently encumbered with heaps of stones, and having a rather uninviting aspect, even when lighted up by the rays of the morning sun. Farther on we again cross the water by a neat rustic bridge; and as the scenery throughout is rather dreary, and presents the same appearance, although the valley in some parts seems well adapted for pasture, and as there are no plants of any great interest in this part of the glen to detain us, we hasten on at as rapid a pace as possible, till at length we find the monotony of the road somewhat relieved by the sight of Loch Callater before us.

At its foot is a keeper's house, near to which the path for Lochnagar strikes off. But however anxious you may be to begin the ascent, and find the realisation of what you conjured up in your dreams, and what you inferred from the poem—with the exception of course of the fall which awakened you, and the icy machine, and the Byronic ghosts, although the latter item in this incredulous matter-of-fact age would be something to boast of all your life—I must ask you first to come a little out of the way with me, and visit one of the richest botanical

spots in the district. Do you see yonder dark opening on the right, about a mile and a half above the head of the loch? That is the corrie of *Loch Kandor*, and even although you were not a botanist, it will amply repay a visit. We skirt the left side of the loch, which, as we have already stated, is remarkably void of aquatic vegetation, and without a single tree upon its banks. Near to that large lichen-covered block is a small spring of excellent water, called the *Priest's Well*, which, as the legend goes, arose in answer to his prayers at a time when the loch and all the streams were for a long period frozen up, and the ice lay so thick that the inhabitants of the upper part of the glen could nowhere get the least supply of water. Arrived at the head of the loch, we make our way through the marshy ground as best we can, picking up several specimens of the rather rare *carex aquatilis*, observing the white petals of the sundew fully expanded at this early hour, inhaling the fine strong scent of the bog-myrtle, and admiring the different tints of yellow, white, and red which the sphagnums assume. We cross the stream at the most eligible spot we can discover, which will entirely depend upon the state of the water. Here we perceive that it has recently changed its course, and, deserting its old stony channel, has cut itself a new passage through a bank of black peat, which accounts for the dark colour of the water in the upper part of the loch. We now make straight for the corrie through heath and bog, amidst which is abundance of the cloudberry or averan, with its light red berries, starting here and there a covey of grouse, causing a red hare to bolt away from its quiet retreat in fear, and admiring as we go along a mountain torrent, which pours itself down a lofty perpendicular precipice in front with a noise like thunder, and very appropriately named the *Break-Neck Waterfall*. Near its base are a number of large masses of stone, which at one time afforded a safe retreat, and, from their position, a first-class habitation,

for foxes. Amongst them may be seen growing a few trees, bent and gnarled, some quite stripped of bark and foliage, and others fast hastening to decay—the only specimens of existing wooded vegetation in the whole glen, though, as the roots and stems in the mosses testify, this was at one time much more abundant. The glen extends for some distance beyond this, between high bare hills, and terminates, or rather commences, in a steep corrie.

But we are now fairly in the recess of Kandor, and proceed for some distance alongside the burn, sometimes over dry grass and heath, at other times over wet marshes and yielding peat, till at length we stand on a grassy slope with the corrie before us, and the loch at our feet, and scenery around us of the finest description. Said I not truly that it would well repay a visit? Look at those deep waters lying in a circular basin, which He who holds them in the hollow of his hand has scooped out for them in the rock: see what a beautiful bluish-green colour they present just now when the sun is shining brightly down, but anon to become quite dark when yon cloud comes across, and its shadow falls upon them; mark how smooth and unruffled is their surface, except when occasionally broken by the trout as they leap above it to catch their insect prey. Contrast the grassy hill on our right, on whose sides the sheep are feeding, with the steep precipitous rugged corrie on the left where only the hawk could dwell. Tell me, if you can, whether these are drops of water or scales of mica which are sparkling in the sun on yonder ledge of rock. Now we can account for the reddish appearance which the corrie presented at a distance; for we perceive that the slaty strata is here intermixed with a dyke of felspar porphyry, whose natural colour has acquired a brighter tint from the constant disintegration of the surface by the winter torrents which rush down it to the loch. But what are those white masses like large rounded

blocks of quartz far down the slope upon the ledges, for at one time some of them appeared to be moving? They are sheep who, possessed of more courage, greed, foolishness, or probably all three combined, than their neighbours, have descended thus far from their pasture grounds to clip the richer herbage (*festuca ovina*), regardless of how they may get back again. But now let us on to these crags and shelves on the left, which stretch to the Break-Neck Waterfall, and we shall find that the scenery derives additional charms from the number of Alpine plants which grow thereon. As, however, you say that you are not so enthusiastic a botanist as to disqualify yourself for the ascent of Lochnagar by climbing amidst these rugged rents, we shall pass along the grassy slope at their base, where the mountain daisy blooms, and try what we can pick up and distinguish. See how the wet sides of these cliffs are adorned by the mountain saxifrages, with their white, yellow, and purple flowers. Notice the greenish-yellow blossoms of the rose-root stonecrop, growing in abundance behind those blocks; while up in the rifts you may distinguish the Alpine meadow-rue, the moss-campion, various hawkweeds, the kidney-shaped mountain sorrel, and the woolly and dwarf willows. And if we were to examine them more minutely, we should find many other rare and characteristic plants, which of themselves would make an herbarium valuable, particularly the *carex Vahlii*, two tufts of which at least, the situation of which I would not show you, have yet escaped the avaricious eyes and ruthless hands of vagabond botanical Vandals. A rich harvest of very rare mosses, too, we might gather in the moist crevices and shady recesses of the rocks. But I see you are getting impatient, and longing to be off, so you may put the memorials of Loch Kandor you have gathered into your vasculum, and those which you have merely seen into your mind, and we shall be gone. With a last lingering look at the corrie and the loch—a farewell bleat from a

sheep which begins to doubt the propriety of its descent, and a hoarse croak from an invisible raven amongst the crags—a few years ago it might have been a scream from an eagle—we retrace our steps to the Callater. As we descend, we collect several fine species of splachnums, and again crossing the stream, we once more reach the head of Loch Callater, admiring a small torrent which gushes, clear and sparkling, over the ledge upon our right, appearing at this distance like molten crystal.

Instead of descending to the keeper's house, and there entering upon the stereotyped path to Lochnagar, let us make a short cut through the heath, and join it farther up upon the ridge. The track may easily be followed by any one who is accustomed to ramble amongst the mountains and make a good use of his eyes, since, though often it is not distinctly visible, yet heaps of stones have been here and there erected as finger-posts on the spots where you would be most likely to go wrong. In some places it is very dirty and boggy, as where we now are walking, and torn up by the hoofs of the numerous ponies by which at this season it is traversed. Avoiding those in the hollow as much as we can, we ascend a ridge of *Cairn-Taggart* upon our right, and, pausing for a moment after our uphill climb, to get back our breath and wipe the perspiration from our brows, and imbibe the mountain-dew, we pursue our way eastward along the track for a considerable distance over a pretty dry heath encumbered with stones, seeing little to attract attention, save the southern ridges of Lochnagar, the names of several of which are unpronounceable by the Saxon, the hills of Glen Ey, and behind them Ben-y-Gloe, and the peaks of the Cairngorm range. We again for some way descend, and, avoiding the swampy ground of the path by keeping a little above it, we come to a brawling brook, which afterwards forms the Muic, and flows into what appears from this to be a small uninteresting sheet of water near the marshy hollow on our

right, which, however, is the famous Duloch, bounded by the high perpendicular craigs of Corbreach on the left, and Cairn Bannock on the right. We cross, and proceeding uphill as quickly as we can for about two miles in a north-east direction, we at length reach a ridge, from which we catch the first glimpse of the summit of Lochnagar, marked by two large cairns at some distance from each other. We may here pause and look around us for a moment. Before us is a long, bare, bleak moorland, covered with detritus where the soil is not peaty, with only a scanty vegetation of short black ling and unhealthy-looking mosses, amongst which, as for the greater part of the way up, grows the *cladonia vermicularis*, that slender, white, wormy-looking lichen which you perceive twisting itself around their stems. Observe how the turf is ploughed up by the hoofs of the deer in their passage to and from the Ballochbuie ; and, lo ! there are at least a hundred and fifty of them standing on the other side of yonder gully gazing down upon us, and wondering whether we are sportsmen or not. You may look at them in turn as long as you please, provided you do not move towards them, for they see no stag-hound at your heels, and they instinctively know that your cudgel is not a rifle. But face about to the left, and advance for a dozen yards to the brink of the precipice, and you will behold one of those scenes which constitute the glories of Lochnagar. It is the *northern corrie* of the mountain, forming an extensive curve—its sides covered with a great quantity of granite blocks, and large detritus, amongst which may be found many of the plants we perceived at Loch Kandor, and in addition, the very rare *carex leporina*, not uncommon all the way up from the craigs at its base, and luckily often in such inaccessible situations that there is no fear of its being speedily eradicated, unless the ravens and hawks should take a fancy for botanising. At the bottom of the corrie are three small tarns, the largest of which is called Lochan-ean, and one time, as its name

imports, a famous breeding-place of gulls, and from which issue the streams which, traversing by different routes the Ballochbuie, at length unite together, and form the noisy headlong Garrawalt.

But we move onwards without looking further around us, save to admire the green plain studded with trees around Invercauld, that we may enjoy the scenery from the top of the mountain, by gazing on it as a whole, rather than by taking it in bit by bit. Ascending a stony slope, and making our way over large blocks and slabs of granite, we at length stand upon the wide summit of Lochnagar. Lochnagar! where Byron climbed and dreamed and sang in strains well worthy of its glories, drinking inspiration from the watery mists which bedew, and the melting snows which sparkle upon its brow—a source which the Sassenach bard, who wanders amidst gay landscapes and gardens of roses, never tasted. Passing the southern cairn—the upper portion of which was erected by the people of the Trigonometrical Survey, though the lower portion on this side seems nearly as artificial at first sight—we proceed south-east for a short distance, that we may have a full view of another, and the grandest, of the sights of Lochnagar—viz., the *eastern corrie*. Looking down, we perceive a large semicircular cavity scooped out from the rock, a thousand feet deep, with huge blocks of all shapes and sizes towards the top, and immediately beneath them a magnificent range of shattered, almost quite perpendicular precipices, widely seamed and fissured, with a deep black loch at the bottom, fed by innumerable rills from the corrie, and much larger in reality than at this height it seems, from which the mountain derives its name. The cliffs seem higher and more broken up towards the other end, in some parts resembling huge pyramids, in others presenting the appearance of large squares and cubes, with deep recesses behind them. But we shall see it in even greater splendour as we pass along the top to the northern cairn,

whither we now bend our steps. Here it appears to be divided into several different portions by projecting ridges, some of them narrow precipitous ravines, into whose gloomy depths the eye cannot penetrate—and some of them, as the one in which the loch seems to lie, of considerable width, and visible to the bottom. Standing on the verge and looking down, we well may ask, Is not this a grand, nay, awful sight? Does not your head grow giddy, as you gaze down the rugged precipice into the dark unfathomed waters? Do you not instinctively recoil from the brink, lest the block against which you have planted your feet should give way, and you be precipitated down the awful abyss, where one half of you would infallibly be scattered piecemeal amongst the rugged cliffs, and the other half be swallowed up by the loch? But to see the corrie in all its wild sublimity, we would require to be here in early summer, when deep masses of snow are lying yet unmelted upon the ledges, and the thick mist, lurid with a gleam of sunlight, is rolling along the precipices, and it is thus shrouded in a gloomy mantle of unearthly white and red. Then, indeed, we might easily fancy ourselves to be standing above the mouth of a volcanic crater, which at all times it very much resembles—or, what is more terrible still, to be gazing down upon an opening into the infernal regions. Perhaps, however, the most pictorial view of all is to be got by descending the slope at the northern cairn, and gazing upon it from the loch, where the rocky rents and ruins appear like the massive battlements and turrets of an immense castle, built by the genii for a far more gigantic race than the sons of Anak, and where the blocks upon the top seem carved out into pinnacles of the most chaste designs and exquisite workmanship. The corrie has long been celebrated for the number of interesting plants which, from its appearance, we should conclude would there be found, and is characterised by the presence amongst others of the rare *Mulgedium Alpinum*

—the Alpine sow-thistle, that handsome plant with the blue flowers, which you may perceive far down on yonder grassy ledge, and which is found only in one other station in Great Britain. But we must, in the mean time, be content with merely looking at them, for it would be too great a round-about to go down to the loch, and then ascend and search for them among the rugged rents. So, let us on to the cairn, and enjoy the view from the highest point of the mountain.

We seat ourselves upon one of the blocks at the top, both to rest our weary feet and to enjoy the prospect at greater ease. If you wish thoroughly to appreciate it, you must first get your mind into proper trim by putting your stomach into proper order; so out with the provisions, and as we feast our appetite on sandwiches and milk, let us also feast our eyes on beauty and magnificence. It is indeed a glorious and extensive view that we have, and one which well repays the wearisome ascent, and makes us, as we gaze upon it, forget and no longer feel our fatigue. Extending as it does over cultivated fields and barren moors, over wide plains and mountain ranges, over populous cities and villages, too, though we cannot see them, from the Frith of Forth to the Moray Frith on the one hand, and from the German Ocean almost to the Atlantic Ocean on the other, it is no wonder that, apart from the charms which Byron's burning strains have thrown around it, Lochnagar should always have been so greatly admired for its noble outline, and should have attracted the feet of so many hundred tourists for the view which it affords. Many marvellous reports are circulated wholesale and retail, by some of the peasantry of the district, as to the distance and objects which may be seen from the top; but if you lend a credulous ear to the one-half of them, you will certainly be miserably disappointed when you climb and look for yourself. Could the telescope pierce through the mountains and reveals what lies between

them—were it an immense level or gently rising plain which stretched around you—were the villages and farmhouses situated on the tops of the hills—these reports might indeed be realised. But as it is, the view is essentially mountainous, and, with the exception of what lies immediately beneath us along the valley of the Dee and one or two of its glens, we will perceive but few traces of cultivation or of the abodes of mankind in the far distance. Although you had the best glass in the world, and were to look through it till doomsday, you might just as well expect to discover the man in the moon as your own domicile in Aberdeen or Edinburgh, and to detect the wind passing by you as to perceive the smoke rising from its chimneys. The component features of the prospect are on a large, not a minute scale, which, however, detracts nothing from its grandeur and extent. If you take your telescope and look steadily through it, in a clear day like this, when the most distant objects are well defined as far as outline is concerned—and this, let me tell you, is something rather uncommon upon dark Lochnagar—you may perceive the Lammermoor Hills on the south, looming like a dim low cloud in the horizon which bounds your view; the higher peaks of Argyle and Inverness upon the west, through which, if you could pierce, you might detect the Atlantic; ridges and isolated hills meeting the sky on the north as far as the Moray Frith; and the green waters of the German Ocean upon the east, which are here and there visible, with the ships upon their bosom, through the openings in the lower tracts. Between these a sea of dark mountains of all heights and forms lies stretched out in Perth, Forfar, and Aberdeen, whose billows are aye at rest, and whose wavy surface no wind can ever ruffle. Silence deep and unbroken is around us, and the loud sound of the world's pulse mingles not with the throbbings of our hearts. Beneath us we see just enough to remind us that we are still human beings

dwelling on earth with men of like passions with ourselves. For, even with the steep frowning glories of Lochnagar, there mingle the smiling beauties of green fields of waving oats planted by human hands, and the abodes of mankind, from that of royalty itself—which, however, is concealed from view by Craig-an-gowan—down to the hut of the humble cottar, built by human labour; and Byron, could he now stand here, would perceive, a little beyond the cloud-encircled forms of his fathers' spirits, which in a clear day like this we vainly look for, the wreaths of smoke from an establishment where another kind of spirits are manufactured. It is a scene upon which we could gaze and meditate for hours, and hear the great Creator speaking to us in His marvellous works.

But it is now high time for us to retrace our steps homeward, especially as there is a white mist rolling rapidly down from the north-west, enshrouding the Cairngorm mountains, and threatening soon to be here; and though there is not much danger of our losing the path, yet it would be very unpleasant to be overtaken by it, the more so if it be the precursor of a thunder-storm, which at this season of the year is more than probable. With a last look, then, on the surrounding scenery and down into the corrie, we take our departure, with the hope that years may not elapse ere we tread it again. Traversing the road we came as fast as we are able, avoiding the bogs and marshes as much as we may, leaping them when we can, and treading lightly on them when we cannot—raising a dotterel here and there amongst the stones, and a flock of ptarmigan amongst the heather—starting a hare from its retreat in the grass, or a hawk on a crag looking out for prey—we in turn ascend and descend the flanks of the mountain, till at length we find ourselves once more in sight of Loch Callater. Crossing the peaty hole before us the best way we can, we leave the beaten, slippery, boggy path, and strike up

the hill before us, where, though our feet may get wet, there is no danger of our getting a fall, till we are opposite the keeper's house, where we descend to the road through the glen. We are just in time, for the mist is down upon us; but as it is damp and chilly, and has come in the form of small drizzling rain, we need not be afraid of thunder. How gloomy the glen now looks, clothed in this dark thick shroud! how bare and bleak the moorland seems, now that the glories of the day have died away! And yet were it judiciously planted with clumps and strips of native trees, by the stream and up the hill-slopes, it would become a very fine-looking glen, and present a totally different aspect alike in sunshine and in storm. Trudging along heavily, we once more reach its mouth and pass Achallater, thinking every mile longer than the preceding, and wishing for a drive over the two which are yet before us. At length, after a heavy but most interesting walk and scramble of 30 miles, in which, if our feet have become a little sore, our minds have become very much invigorated, we arrive in Castleton at about nine o'clock, where I bid you good evening, and recommend you to take a cup of warm tea or coffee in preference to anything else. Then go early to bed and sleep off your fatigue, rising just in time for breakfast refreshed and filled with pleasing recollections of dark Lochnagar.

CHAPTER X.

FROM CASTLETON TO LINN OF DEE PER PONY.

THIS, though the shortest of our excursions, is far from being the least interesting, and is always patronised alike by the robust and the infirm. It may be done comfortably in six hours by a tolerable pedestrian; and as there is a capital road the whole way, it may easily be traversed on foot, except by the more delicate of the weaker vessels. Seeing, however, that we are still rather worn out by our yesterday's long and fatiguing trip to Lochnagar, we shall order a pair of ponies at one of the inns, and start, say at half-past two in the afternoon. Taking an early dinner, and plenty of it, we set out and find the ponies ready. We mount, and though we should be far from being good equestrians, there is but little chance of our falling off, and none at all of our being thrown by these steady-going, sure-footed animals.

Soon we leave the village behind, and, passing several houses on its outskirts, generally of mean appearance in the outside, and scanty accommodation in the inside, we enter a birch wood, which stretches on before us along the base of Morrone for several miles. On the other side of the Dee, at the foot of *Cairn Drochit*, a broad granitic hill, well wooded for a considerable way up from its base, and deeply seamed by two winter torrents, we perceive the farmhouse of *Allan More*, attached

to the Invercauld Arms Inn. Though there is but little around us to attract attention, and we cannot see far ahead for the trees, yet we shall try and make the most of it we can. Notice the various forms which the birch assumes, some stunted, others erect—some mere bushes, others tall trees. See the numerous rills which descend in all directions from Morrone, rendering the wood in many places a mere bog, and here and there forming small cascades as they descend the slaty rocks by the road-side, the largest of which, about a mile farther on, is termed the *Carr Linn*. Behold how the river flows smoothly on, clear and sparkling in the sunshine, over a pebbly bed, with the bank beside us clothed with birch, varied by the aspen and rowan. And so we trot amidst similar scenery for two miles, marking the fine position of *Allan-a-quoich*, the farm attached to the Fife Arms Inn, situated beneath yonder hill at the entrance to Glen Quoich, with large cultivated fields in front, and dark pine woods behind,—catching occasional glimpses of several peaks of the Cairngorm mountains in the north-west,—and regretting that a few trees are not felled in one or two places to give us a better view of the green plain around Mar Lodge. Now we come to a few scattered houses on the road-side, with small fields of turnips, oats, and potatoes, and perceive one or two more to the left, called Braegarrie, on a hill-side beyond a pine wood.

And were it not for the sound of our horses' hoofs, we would now hear the noise of falling waters close at hand. But a few yards more brings us to the bridge which crosses the stream at the third milestone from Castleton. Looking over to the right, we behold a deep, narrow ravine, fringed with copsewood, ornamented with various flowering plants and ferns, and covered with a variety of trees growing in the crevices of the crags. The noise which salutes our ears will be at once accounted for if we dismount and lean over the parapet. We then perceive a

large micaceous rock, with a narrow, deep fissure seaming its perpendicular face, which, however, is turned away from us, and down which the water falls into a deep pool beneath, after a descent of upwards of 30 feet. It is the much admired *Linn of Corrymulzie*; and had there been heavy rain for the last two days, it would have been a much finer sight, as the smaller stream would then have passed over, covering with foaming waters the whole surface of the rock. The fall, however, is always very pretty, not certainly from its great height, but from its silvery waters flowing between rocks clothed with living verdure, and kept in perpetual freshness by the spray. But it is, perhaps, in winter, after a night of hard frost, that it appears to most advantage. When the long frozen tangles of water reflect all the colours of the rainbow, as the noonday sun for a brief space shining overhead above the bridge glints down upon them; when the more slender icicles assume the different tints of the withered stems of the plants upon which they have been formed; when the stream flows coldly and more sluggishly over the rounded slippery masses of ice, and the force of the current and John Frost contend together for the mastery over the pool beneath; and when the sparkling crystals of snow lie so lightly upon the ever-green ferns, as not to destroy the outline of their delicate fronds and pinnules;—then, indeed, it is a glorious sight, well worthy of the dweller in milder southern districts braving the rigours of a Braemar winter to behold. Were it not for our ponies we might enter at the wicket, and seat ourselves in yonder foghouse, where the best view is to be obtained, and then, crossing to the other side by a narrow wooden bridge, descend the ravine to its termination, admiring its high precipitous crags, powdered with white, and yellow, and green leprarias, some of which a century hence may expand into lichens, and others within a few years may be developed into mosses. But if you wish to see more of the

gully, and pick up any of the interesting plants, for which it is a choice locality, you can easily come back again when you have more time to spare. Meanwhile let us remount.

Looking behind us as we leave the bridge, we get a fine view of the western face of Morrone, covered at its base with woods of birch and pine; and our eyes are at once attracted by a large conspicuous dyke of reddish felspar porphyry upon its brow. The finely-wooded hill upon our left, visible from Castleton, is termed the *Raven's Crag*, once a famous haunt of these birds, one of which may occasionally be heard croaking on it still. Immediately after passing some outhouses, we come upon *Corrymulzie Cottage*, a hunting-seat of the Right Honourable Lord Fife, the highest gentleman's residence in Scotland—a beautiful, though perhaps rather toy-like villa, everywhere covered with honeysuckle and other climbing plants, trained on a wooden framework, and surrounded with shrubberies, in which are several trees, which one wonders to see growing so luxuriantly at such an elevation. Half a mile farther on, we come to the *Victoria Chain Bridge*—a fine wooden structure across the Dee, with a neat lodge opposite the entrance. The road across it leads along an avenue, on which are some noble pines, to *Mar Lodge*, another and the principal seat in this quarter of the Earl of Fife. It is picturesquely situated on an extended level plain at the foot of a thickly-wooded hill, which, to avoid breaking their delicate Saxon jaws with the guttural Gaelic name, tourists have generally christened *Mar's Hill*. The building itself—of which the central portion is the oldest, and to which there is a fine garden attached—is low, and of no great extent, nor of any great interest in an architectural point of view, bearing evident tokens on its exterior of the storms and snows of a Highland winter, and probably of the somewhat damp situation in which it lies. The surrounding scenery, when viewed from the

lodge, is remarkably fine, and, apart from the site of the house, is unsurpassed even by that at Invercauld. In front, a noble park reaching down to the river-side, and studded with umbrageous trees, where numbers of deer, tamed by hunger, may be seen clipping the herbage in early spring when food has failed them on the mountains; behind, a magnificent forest of pine—though, alas! but the wreck of what once it was—stretching far up the hill in an unbroken mass of dark verdure; on the east and west, the well-wooded valley of the Dee, with the shining river gliding swiftly along, and bounded by high romantic hills, which seem to form an unbroken circle of tree and rock around the plain. In fact, were the building more extensive, and in a more elevated situation, it would need but little external ornament or architectural device to render it the worthy palace of the Deeside Highlands. The whole property on that side the river belonged of old to the M'Kenzies of Dalmore, who, falling into pecuniary difficulties after the Rebellion, sold it to Duff of Braco, the ancestor of the present Earl of Fife.

But during the time I have thus been describing Mar Lodge unto you, we have walked on for half a mile amidst birch and pine lining the road on either side, and are now leaving the Raven's Crag behind us, with its steep precipices and luxurious trees. We then enter the straggling hamlet of *Inverey*—the old lairds of which were the Farquharsons of that ilk, who, like their neighbours over the water, had the misfortune one day to find their pockets quite destitute of the needful, and were consequently obliged to part with their estate to the same monopolising gentleman with the long purse. The village is divided by the Ey water into two unequal portions, called Easter and Wester, or, generally, by the inhabitants, *Little* and *Muckle Inverey*. The houses, as you perceive, are, for the most part, genuine specimens of Highland huts, with small pieces of cultivated ground

attached. Two buildings, however, of a superior class to the others, at once arrest the eye. Yonder, on the right, is the Established school-house—a neat erection, at the side of which are the ruins of the old mansion of the Inverveys. That still finer one on the rising ground to the left, is Inverey Cottage, occupied by the head forester of Lord Fife. Alongside of the latter runs the road through Glen Ey, whither we shall now turn our steps—or rather, our ponies' heads—for the purpose of visiting the "*Colonel's Cave*," about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles down the glen. So let us spur—I beg your pardon, we have no spurs—kick on. We enter the glen, with low green hills of mica slate on either side, well adapted for pasture, and one in front, seeming to intimate by its position as distinctly as though it spoke in words, "No passage this way." Highland hills, however, are not always to be trusted to by the Sassenach, and already you perceive that we have not yet reached land's end, but shall get round the apparent obstruction quite easily. Now we are at the stream, which is crossed by a stone bridge with a nice green painted gate. And yonder, to the right, is another similar one on a narrow wooden bridge, at which we might have entered to see a rather pretty fall of water, which comes tumbling over a mass of rock of considerable height, a short way up the ravine. But we shall not at present take time, as it has no peculiarity whatever, except we should be so lucky as to see the desperate efforts and the high leaps which the trout occasionally make to get up and over into the burn above. We dismount and open the wicket, wondering for what purpose it was placed there—whether merely for show, or to give visitors trouble; and, of course, in the evil suspicions of our hearts, coming to the latter conclusion. Pursuing our way over a rather rugged road, with some thickets of slender birch-trees on either side, we come in sight of a hunting-shieling farther down the glen—the only existing specimen of a human abode therein.

At some distance on this side of it, we find a narrow path on the heath to the left which leads down to the cave. Tying our horses to a tree, we descend a steep curving brae, evidently artificially formed in the rock, with a few rude steps of stone to assist, or rather to restrain, our downward progress. We soon reach the bottom, and find ourselves standing on a narrow micaceous ledge, in a deep chasm betwixt the rocks, with high perpendicular cliffs on either side, covered with a number of ferns and a variety of flowering plants, which know best themselves whence they can derive sufficient nourishment to enable them to look so fresh and grow so tall. Beneath us is the water, which, but a few yards farther up, we perceive foaming amongst the boulders, and dashing over the stony rapids, now deep and still, with its current scarcely perceptible, hushed to rest in its rocky cradle. Black enough it looks, for the sun has difficulty in penetrating with its gladsome rays the depths of this narrow ravine, which, in the most sultry weather, is always cool and pleasant to the heated tourist. Overhead are shrubs and trees growing on the brow and in the rifts of the precipice, and our eye is arrested, and our curiosity excited, by the singular situation of a small dark pine growing on a fragment of rock apparently almost detached from the mass, looking as if the first gale of wind or storm of snow would hurl both into the stream beneath. Ten years ago, Dr MacGillivray represents them as on the eve of falling, and though many a fierce tempest has since then swept Glen Ey, and many a sturdy tree in the forest has been laid low, yet there they stand, monuments of the power of Him who upholdeth all things, and without whose knowledge even a sparrow cannot fall to the ground. But now for the cave. Here it is at our side—that long but narrow recess betwixt the overhanging rock and the ledge on which we stand—a secure enough retreat before the path was cut, and unlikely to be discovered by any but the wild

cats or the natives of the district. There the last of the chivalrous Farquharsons of Inverey—the Black Colonel, as he was called—found a safe hiding-place from the search of the soldiers who were sent into Braemar to capture those chiefs who had not made their submission to Government after the defeat of the gallant Dundee at Killcrankie ; and, as report goes, he was here visited and supplied with a drop of the mountain-dew and with plenty of venison and oatmeal cakes by one of the frail sisterhood—a fallen, if a ministering angel. But we must not linger longer at the romantic spot.

Once more upon our ponies' backs, we trot along the way we came, meditating upon the gloomy troublous days of the Stuarts, and mentally wandering away from Glen Ey to Culloden Moor, where the cause of the bravest and best of them was irretrievably—shall we say luckily—lost, though his name shall live for ever in the songs of our native land. And we might find ample material around us, when we look on those hills so admirably adapted for pasture, on those traces of once inhabited cottages, and on that soil so well fitted for cultivation, for a different kind of meditations. We might, in reference thereunto, enter upon a prolix discussion of the famous and much vexed question of the depopulation of Highland glens, in so far as human beings are concerned, in order to make room for deer to feed and multiply, and fatten for the sportsman's rifle. But as we are merely lovers of the picturesque, whether in the shape of a group of cottages or a herd of deer, and have not yet set up as redressers of so-called public grievances, possessing, it is to be hoped, a little of that charity which thinketh no evil, we leave proprietors and the public to settle as they may a matter with which we have no personal concern whatever.

Again we are at the village, the inhabitants of which, with some dozen exceptions, belong entirely to the Roman Catholic Church, and crossing the stream,

which is beautifully fringed on either side with trees and copsewood, we hurry on, and soon leave its scattered houses behind. We pass along, with a low bare hill called the *Hill o' Cat* stretching all the way before us on the one side, and the river with the Forest of Mar beyond it on the other, noticing as we advance the junction of the Lui with the Dee, passing a few small houses, several of them uninhabited and fast going to decay, till at length, seven miles from Castleton, we reach a keeper's house upon the left, amidst a young plantation of firs, forming by its neatness a marked contrast to the huts we have left behind. The next moment we stand—that is, the ponies upon which we sit stand—upon the fine granite bridge above the *Linn of Dee*, erected by the Earl of Fife, and opened by Queen Victoria in September 1857. Although we hear the angry sound of the waters, we see but little of them from horseback, and consequently we dismount and tie the ponies to the railing at its farther side. Descending on the left, we pass below the bridge over ridges of micaceous rock, and the Linn is right beneath. A minute description thereof is useless, for its appearance depends very much upon the state of the water; and hence visitors, after reading the glowing and frequently exaggerated accounts which are given thereof, are sometimes disappointed when they see it for themselves. It consists of a deep, uneven, jagged crevice in the rock, about 300 yards in length, narrower in one part than in another, through which the whole bulk of the water rushes, foaming and boiling with immense force, forming at the upper part a series of rapids, and falling at the lower into several black pools of very great depth, to the surface of which numerous large air-bubbles, may constantly be seen, ascending. At its narrowest portion, which is scarcely four feet broad, we may step from the north bank to the south one; but I believe the feat is growing more difficult, as the slaty ledge on the other side has of late become smoother, and affords a less

secure footing. There were some very laughable anecdotes current about various individuals, who, forgetting the old adage, "to look before they leap," have got themselves into a fix after stepping over, and could be got back again only with great difficulty, and sometimes by the employment of artificial means. One elderly stout gentleman especially, with pretty long legs, contrived to get one on either bank, but as his muscular powers gave way through faintness of his heart, he was unable to draw his right limb back, and was thus left standing for a considerable time, the very picture of horror and despair; and I have no doubt he found a few additional grey hairs next morning in his pate, as mementoes of the Linn of Dee. It is a well-known fact that, notwithstanding the great force with which the water rushes down, salmon contrive to ascend the rapid, and are caught in the river above. This, however, I should suppose, can take place only when the water is very much swollen, and the height consequently reduced. As we look at the high precipices, rounded and hollowed out by the action of the water, and scooped into basins of various shapes and sizes, far above what it can now reach, even in its highest state, we cannot help wondering how long ages must have elapsed since it began thus to cut its way through the once solid mass of rock, and gradually to settle down into its present channel. But we cannot stay to speculate upon the subject, for our ponies are getting impatient; and since you have no desire to step across, and I have no inclination to try it twice, let us be gone.

The road before us leads along the Dee, and over the Geaully by Cairn Bynnoch, presenting little of any peculiar interest whatever—the scenery being very bare and bleak, though in some places it affords very good pasturage—until we come to the famous Glen Tilt, as well known to lawyers as to tourists, where it assumes a fine romantic character, and by which we reach Blair

Athol, thirty miles distant from Castleton. We however turn to the right, and go back to the village, along the road on the west side of the Dee. As we ride on, we note the fantastic forms which the weather-beaten pines on the bare moor at the outskirts of the forest assume; some dead and lifeless, with their bare tapering stems spirally twisted; others with a few branches only upon their tops, and others with one side quite denuded of boughs, but covered with dense dark leaves. Opening a gate and passing one or two small houses, we come to the substantial though plain granite bridge over the *Lui*, the bed of which, as we perceive, is covered with mica slate. And now we are fairly in the forest, with nothing but tall dark pines on either side, and innumerable *midges* flying in our face—with no sounds to be heard save the vesper songs of the birds and the distant murmur of the river. Not a breath of wind stirs the pines; not a sound of humanity reaches our ears; not a trace of the works of man, save the road on which we ride, presents itself to our eyes. And as we gaze on the soft golden light everywhere diffused around us, spread over the mountain tops and glinting through the trees, as the sun is preparing to depart in glory for his evening rest, we cannot help checking the prosaic sounds of our ponies' hoofs, that in silence we may stand still and meditate, and breathe a prayer that when our sun of life begins to set, it also may go down in like effulgence. Farther on, we come to a keeper's house upon our right, a little off the road, and a short way beyond this, to a path on the left, which leads away along the hill-side to Glen Lui and the Cairngorum mountains, and is not only the route generally taken, but also in every respect the most preferable one to Ben Macdhui. Still onwards through the forest we ride, observing some birch-trees now mingling with the pine, till we come where two roads meet. By still pursuing the main one we have been traversing, we would reach the Linn of Quoich by a path farther down, which

strikes off it to the left. As, however, it looks best when its waters are sparkling and its dark rocks partially lighted up in the sunshine—and as the ruler of the day is now fast hastening to the western wave, and his beams are too high to reach the ravine—we shall take another opportunity of paying it the visit which it so well deserves. The path on our right leads down past Mar Lodge, and on the gravelly bank at its side I have often seen several beautiful lizards in a summer morning basking in the sunshine. As none of the Fife family are living at the Lodge just now, we shall take the liberty of using it, even though it is a private road. We enter at a small gate, and mark the fine solid embankment on the right to keep out the swollen waters of the river, which before its erection often spread themselves over the noble lawn, and rendered it in several places little better than a marsh. In a few minutes we are in front of the building ; and, making a short pause to run our eyes over its exterior and admire the surrounding scenery, especially the wooded Raven's Crag, and the heathy hill of Morrone, which we here perceive in their whole extent, we trot along the avenue and over the Victoria Bridge, and once more find ourselves on the Deeside road. Passing in succession various parties of tourists, who have been up as far as Corriemulzie for their favourite evening walk, we at length reach the village, and, giving up the ponies, which show no symptoms of fatigue, to their proper owner, find ourselves in capital condition for sitting down to a late tea, and shaming any old maid in all Christendom with the quantity of the Chinese beverage which we manage to imbibe.

CHAPTER XI.

FROM CASTLETON TO BEN MACDHUI PER GIG.

THE present excursion, which all the more adventurous tourists in Braemar are anxious to undertake, but often, on account of fogs, fail to complete, occupies at least twelve hours, and is one which it is quite useless to attempt unless early in autumn, and in a perfectly clear day. If there has been warm sunshine and drought for a week previously to dry the hills, so much the better ; but whether or not, as your time is so limited, and as from that fine sunset it promises well for to-morrow, we shall make the trial. Since, however, we are to be so long away, it will be necessary to-night to lay in a good supply of sandwiches, and fill the flask—for climbing mountains is both hungry and thirsty work. As it is by far too long a journey to be performed on foot, and as the little you know of botany will not lead us away from the beaten track, we shall order a gig from one of the inns. Of course, if your better half and the four young ladies had also been going, we would have required to take a larger machine, provided we could have got one spacious enough (which I very much doubt) to stow them away in their present extensive proportions. As I am going with you a guide will not be requisite, though if you were alone you could never find your way to the mountain, and still less manage to climb it, without one. We leave

our couches in the morning not later at least than half-past five, and, eating a hearty breakfast to sustain the outward man, we look out to see how the day promises. "What a pity!" you exclaim, "there is mist on the hills; I suspect it is all up with our trip." But look again for a few minutes, and you will perceive that it is only a thin morning drapery in which they are robed, and which they are beginning to put off, even while you gaze upon them. The mist is not creeping along, but rolling up their sides, a sure symptom of a fine clear day, so let us make haste and be gone. Not forgetting the eatables and the strong waters, we set out and find the gig waiting for us, with a decent, perhaps somewhat venerable-looking, quadruped harnessed thereunto. But so much the better; it will run the more steadily, and not attempt to bolt away, as a frisky young animal might have done.

Seating ourselves, the hostler lets go the horse's head, and probably takes a good laugh in his sleeve at the awkward start which, in our unskilfulness, we stupidly make. But never mind, we are soon out of his sight; and if we have not so much charity as to forgive the injury, we can give him a shilling less than otherwise we would have done on our return. Leaving the village behind, we drive along through the wood of Morrone, where the night dews still sparkle like jewels upon the birch, till we come to a small hut by the water-side, close to which a path leads down to the ford by which we cross the river. The stream just now is very shallow, and we are speedily on the other side, where the track conducts us for a short way along the bank of the river to a gate, from which it goes off at right angles till it brings us to the main road north of the Dee, at the foot of the Cairn Drochit, some distance above the farmhouse of Allan-More. We drive along with a wood of larch intermixed with pine upon our right, and green pasture of considerable extent upon our left, with Craig Kenneth behind

us, Morrone at our side, and the Raven's Crag before us, all visible here in their full extent, and presenting a most romantic appearance. At length we reach Allana-quoich, where we put up our gig, in order that we may more conveniently visit the scenery at the *Linn*, which is one of the finest sights in the district. The narrow path to the right leads up through the wood to the Quoich, and in a few minutes we are standing on the white wooden bridge above the falls. The Linn, which somewhat resembles that of the Dee, though on a smaller scale, consists of a long narrow fissure in the slaty rock, $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide at its commencement, through which the water rushes with immense force, foaming and surging into a deep pool beneath. The fall is not very high, from the gradually increasing depth of the rent, and probably it borrows its chief attraction from the steep ravine, fringed with pine and birch, and ornamented with various wild flowers, through which the stream afterwards flows, and of which a very fine view may be obtained by descending a narrow path on the other side, and standing by yonder fallen pine-tree which spans the water. There are several very pretty rapids, extending for some distance above the Linn, where the stream dashes over the ledges of rock with which its bed is paved, and which, after a good fall of rain, will amply repay a stroll along its side. It derives its name of *Quoich*, a goblet, from the circumstance that there was once a deep round hole above the Linn, which now has been perforated by the water, and which, it is said, was employed as a punch-bowl by the Earl of Mar on one of his hunting excursions. Taken either by itself or in connection with the surrounding scenery of mountain and forest, the fall is certainly very pretty, especially when the gloomy ravine is lighted up by the noonday sun, and the dark waters are gleaming beneath its rays. The effect, however, is considerably spoiled by the situation of the bridge, which prevents us from at once seeing the whole unbroken rush

of water as it dashes down the fissure. The path on the other side leads up to the road through Glen Quoich, which is only a few miles in extent, commencing at the south-western flank of Ben-na-board, and presenting no features of any particular interest. It now contains not a single inhabited house, though it was not always so, as we are reminded by that one beside us fast hastening to decay. But if we are to take, as a sample of its old inhabitants, the swindling individual whom Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, in his *Sketches of the Highlands*, records to have bilked systematically the miller of Glen Quoich of his dues, by grinding his corn at the mill by night when the owner was fast asleep in bed, it is probably not to be regretted that its population had disappeared. We have no further time, however, to spend at the Linn, either for the purpose of looking at what now is, or speculating upon what has been; so, walking back as fast as we can, we again reach the farmhouse.

Once more in the gig, we drive on through a gate which has been opened for us, and follow the road in the meadow till we reach the ford across the Quoich, beside a small wooden bridge for foot-passengers, which is not in the very best state of preservation. We cross, and cannot help being struck with the great damage that has been done to the pasture by the fickle stream having frequently changed its course in its angry moods, and left many acres of good land covered with stones and detritus. In a few minutes we come to another gate, and, having opened it, find ourselves fairly within the extensive forest of Mar, and, upon a knoll to the left, catch a glimpse of a small tower called the Craggans, exactly half-way betwixt the German Ocean and the Caledonian Canal. Straight forward we drive, passing the road through Glen Quoich on our right, and another nearly opposite, leading to the Victoria Bridge, amongst tall gloomy pines on either side, varied here and there by a few birches, with little but dark verdure to be seen, the

songs of birds to be heard, and the attacks of gnats to be felt—past the back of Mar Lodge, which we scarcely perceive for the trees, until, about two miles from Allana-quoich, we come to a narrower road on the right, leading up the hill to *Glen Lui*. At this season we can hardly mistake it, as the traces of the numerous vehicles by which it is frequented are a sufficient guide. We enter and ascend the bræ for about a mile, amidst similar scenery to what we have already gone through, observing many large nests of ants even at this elevation, and noticing here and there a few aged pine-trees, bent and gnarled, the last survivors of those which studded the ancient forest of Mar. At length we begin to descend, and speedily reach the outskirts of the forest, and behold between us and the hill in front, termed the Duke's Craig, the Lui water flowing quietly on to mingle with the Dee.

We are now in the glen, which is about 5 miles in length, but of no great breadth, bounded on either side by hills of moderate height, which bear every appearance of having once been at least partially wooded, and on which even now the heather and the grass contend for the mastery, though a few years more will see the former victorious. The first thing that strikes us in regard to the physical appearance of the glen is the fine grassy sward, smooth and unbroken as a lawn, wherewith, on both sides the stream, it is covered to a considerable distance. From this we at once conclude that, not many years ago, it must have been a pastoral strath; and when we mark the numerous mole-hills with which it is clothed, we infer that, once on a time, it must also in some parts have been cultivated. This conclusion is further strengthened, when, as we advance, we come upon the frequent ruins of houses, telling that in days of yore a considerable population must here have lived, though doubtless from hand to mouth, and toiled, though evidently in the sweat of their brows. Shall we drop a tear,

as at first we perhaps are inclined to do, at their disappearance? Were we correspondents of the "Thunderer," we might write a pathetic or indignant letter about the traces of cultivation which we perceive, and ask the editor, who is supposed to know everything, what has become of the old inhabitants. Were we poets, we might take up a lamentation in elegiac verse, and sing of the strong arms and sturdy limbs and hardy frames of the kilted Gaels who once dwelt here, and whose offspring are now feeding their flocks and ploughing their fields far away across the blue ocean, amidst the hills of Canada and Australia. But probably were we one or both of these, we should, as is generally done by such intermeddling grumblers, in their eagerness to maintain their own one-sided views, overlook the following important facts—viz., that in a severe or late season the crops here must have been a complete failure, which is a very common occurrence still even much farther down the district; that the sheep for five or six months in winter and spring require to be kept in the Lowlands at a great expense; that a different order of things then prevailed, when a little quiet poaching amongst the deer and hares, which were then much more plentiful than now, helped to eke out their scanty means; that the inhabitants, being accustomed to look for support from the proprietors in a time of scarcity, were apt to become careless and lazy, and are therefore far better, both physically and morally, when thrown upon their own resources, and made to trust in their own energies, even though in a distant land. But while we have thus been making our apology for the depopulation of Highland glens in general, and Glen Lui in particular, we have driven on for two or three miles, and entered at a gate into a young fir plantation, surrounded by a high paling to keep out the deer, at the end of which we find ourselves beside a neat hunting-shieling of Lord Fife, nearly ten miles from Castleton. Opening the other gate of the enclosure, near to a small bridge

for foot-passengers, we drive through the *Derry* water, which joins the Lui a short way farther down. Here we stop a moment to look around on the scene before us. A dark pine wood stretches south and north for a considerable distance along the base of the mountains, of which the summit of *Ben Votran*, about 3750 feet in height, is seen on the south-west, and some of the outlying ridges of the lesser Cairngorm in front, the highest of which with the hollow on its side is called *Cairn Vime*. Pursuing our way on the track over the boggy and grassy sward, we cross the Lui, and reach a keeper's house, the last human habitation on the road, where we leave the gig, there being no further passage this way for a machine. The rest of the journey is generally performed by a pony, but a good pedestrian will make far more progress upon his own two legs, which method of locomotion we shall now employ.

On the left a path is seen leading through the wood to *Glen Lui Beg*, from which Ben Macdhui may be ascended after a steep and rugged climb. At present we shall follow the easier and stereotyped route through *Glen Derry*; so let us make no delay in retracing our steps to the stream. The track, for we can scarcely call it a path, being sometimes almost invisible, leads along the west side of the water through the wood which stretches on for about two miles before us. Gloomy enough the forest seems, but still with something romantic about it in its grassy sward and swelling heathy knolls. Deep silence is around us, broken only by the sound of the stream rushing swiftly over its stony channel, the croak of a raven lamenting the days when his race flourished here in all its glory, and wondering why he should now be left alone, and the notes of the cuckoo, which here, even in early summer, seem more melancholy than in lower tracts, and now more so still as it chants its farewell lay before departing to a more congenial clime. But yonder is a

small herd of deer, with the large antlers of a stag, apparently a royal, conspicuous amongst them as they vanish through the dark aisles amongst the trees. Here also is the usual pest of gnats flying about our face, so light your cigar or cutty, and in self-defence give them a fumigation. The pines are in general apparently of a good old age, and, according to the soil and situation, present every variety of appearance. Some of them are rather noble trees, standing aloft in full proportions and robed in a perennial garment of dark green, which neither the summer's heat nor the winter's cold can stain; others, more stunted, and with little foliage save upon their flattened spreading tops, are bowing themselves down to the ground, as if to woo it for a greater supply of nourishment that they may attain a more vigorous growth. But what most forcibly arrests our attention about them is the strange weird aspect and forms of those which have been scarred by the tempests and beaten by the winds of many centuries, and which we will see in greater numbers and more fantastic shapes still farther on. Groups of them are scattered here and there, bent and shrivelled, knotted and gnarled with old age, quite stripped of every particle of bark, and bleached by many a destroying storm, with stems and branches spirally twisted by the winds that have so long tossed them to and fro—the remains of a former generation of the olden time, which have seen their companions one by one laid low, and their places filled by others. Towards the end of the wood there is on our right a deep romantic ravine down which the Derry flows, forming several small falls and rapids, with shelving rocks on either side, upon which grow various interesting plants. A hundred yards above this we again cross the water on a small bridge, from which we can see the trout swimming along the sandy bed beneath. We have now left the forest behind us, and enter upon the upper portion of the glen, which presents a long and pretty wide

grassy level, bounded on the west by the bare heathy ridges of *Cairngorm of Derry*, whose conical summit is about 3800 feet above the sea, and on the east by a broad range of low hills separating it from Glen Quoich, which are partly grassy and partly stony. A few scattered pines still grow on the green plain and the hill-sides, some hale and vigorous, but most of them bare and blasted, standing the dead amongst the living, which the storms of a few more winters will prostrate on the ground, and the place that now knows them shall know them no more. The glen is well adapted for pasture, and must undoubtedly afford first-rate grazing for the deer, and, as may be inferred from the numerous stumps still standing, must once have been thickly wooded throughout as well as far up on the hill-sides. For nearly three miles we trudge along a narrow path which is sometimes stony, at other times marshy, sometimes gravelly, and at other times grassy, noticing mole-hillocks here and there even at this height, seeing a few dippers by the stream, passing the remains of a shepherd's bothy, and marking especially the last tree we come to—the sentinel which guards the outskirts of the Forest of Mar.

A short distance above this, we cross the stream upon the stones with which its channel is strewn, leaving the track we have been pursuing, which now leads on, across yonder low ridge in front, to Glen Aun in Banffshire. The Derry here bends westward, and we follow its course up *Corrie Etagan*, over stones and bogs, amidst long heath and prickly junipers, with *Ben-na-main*, a high mountain 3850 feet, upon our right, and the ridges connecting Little Cairngorm and Ben Macdhui upon our left. We seem now to be fairly enclosed amongst lofty hills, with no way of exit save the one we came. And verily we have at length entered the vast mountain wilderness of the Cairngorm range, the scenery of which is peculiarly grand and striking. With no traces of human

habitations, and with but one spot where the least refuge may be obtained from the storm, containing many places where in all probability the foot of man has never trod, with no sounds to be heard save the sad moaning of the wind—for Æolus seems here to be always blowing—the hoarse murmur of streams as they rush amongst the boulders, or of cataracts falling down the precipices, it inspires a sense of the deepest solitude within us, and makes us feel, as we wander through it, that here, in nature's desert wastes, we are indeed alone with nature's God. A steep path is seen before us, leading up the rugged ridge, where the Derry comes thundering down in anger from the bosom of its parent loch. We mount right up for a thousand feet, pausing once or twice to recover our breath and admire the fine view which we here obtain of the back of Ben-na-board and the summit of Lochnagar. At length, fairly exhausted, we reach the top of the ridge, and *Loch Etagan* is before us, at an elevation of nearly 3000 feet. It is a rather uninteresting sheet of water to look at, though a pretty good one to fish in—divided into two portions of unequal size, and bounded in one part by a range of high perpendicular precipices, while in some spots beside them it appears to be of very considerable depth. The scenery around is remarkably bare and bleak, and we stop merely for a single moment to take a sip at the flask, and to mark where, on the left, close beside us, the path to Ben Macdhui strikes off. But, before commencing the ascent, it will be as well to pay a visit to the celebrated *Loch Aun*, which is at no great distance. Crossing where the Derry issues from Etagan, we make our way across the bleak moorland—which is covered with boulders of all shapes and sizes, and having but a scanty and stunted vegetation—raising a flock of ptarmigan, and one or two dotterels, as we proceed. Ten minutes brings us to a steep, rugged slope, at the foot of which we perceive the lake reposing in all its wild sublimity. As the tedious

and difficult descent would lead us considerably out of our way, and we have but little time to spare, we shall content ourselves with selecting a position where we shall have not only the loch itself, but also the magnificent scenery at its head, from which it borrows its grandeur, full in view. Notice how quietly it reposes down in its deep cradle, with its dark-blue waters unruffled by the breeze which cools our cheek but fails to reach its bosom. How beautiful and refreshing to the eye is the margin of bright yellow sand by which it is bounded, giving its waters round the sides a light-green tint! What stupendous precipices there are upon our left, with deep rents and fissures in their perpendicular face, from which all those enormous boulders beneath us have fallen! Yonder, on the west, is Cairngorm proper; on the north, Ben Bynock; on the east, Ben-a-main; and behind us, on the south, Ben Macdhui—all giant hills, watching over the little loch, the principal feeder of which comes dashing down the deep ravine beside the precipices, from its source in the bowels of the mountain, scattering its waters in a cloud of spray where it falls from the rocky ridge. Is it not a sight well worth our travel? And yet, to see it in all its glory, we would require to be here when the storm rages fiercely amongst the hills. Then, when the dark clouds settle down on the mountain tops, and the mists roll along their sides, and the moaning wind sweeps across its troubled bosom, and stirs its waters to their lowest depths and whirls them high into the air—when the thunder-peal reverberates from cliff to cliff, and the forked lightning darts hither and thither upon its foaming waves, it inspires a feeling of dread in the stoutest heart, and forces the conviction upon us that the Lord God Omnipotent, indeed, is there reigning in terrible majesty. Amongst the huge boulders between the stream and the cliffs is the *Shelter Stone*, once a famous retreat of poachers, and in which the tourist, when overtaken by a storm, is glad still to

take refuge and spend the night. It is that large block of granite farthest up the slope, and is really a curiosity in its way, having fallen down upon some other large blocks in such a position as to leave a considerable cavity beneath, capable of containing a dozen individuals, more or less, according to the number of ladies. With plenty of heather for a couch, and the means of procuring a good supper, one may quite comfortably lie down and be transported into the land of Nod, and sleep till the morning breaks upon the hills. By descending and climbing up alongside of the stream, we could reach the summit of Ben Macdhui; but, as it is a very fatiguing scramble, we shall return the way we came, and ascend by the easier path.

Retracing our steps to Loch Etagan, and again reaching the other side, we fairly enter upon the path to Ben Macdhui's lofty summit, and strike up the side of the hill from the foot of the loch. The road may easily be followed without much risk of going astray, as, where it is less visible, stones have been erected as finger-posts by the guides. For about two miles we proceed in a south-west direction along the track, which is gravelly and stony, leading for the most part by the burn of Etagan, seeing nothing particularly worthy of notice, either in the surrounding scenery, which is composed chiefly of different ridges of the mountain, or in the nature of the vegetation around, which is chiefly grassy, with no heather, which does not ascend so far. After the sublime scenery upon which we have recently gazed, we feel that before us to be rather bleak and monotonous, until we reach a rocky ridge at the top of a magnificent corrie, from which we have a splendid view of the mountains upon the south, far down into the counties of Perth and Forfar, with the huge Ben-y-gloe in Athol—a noble hill alike in its height and well-defined outline—towering above them all. Selecting a position where we may rest ourselves for a moment, and see the surrounding scenery

to the greatest advantage, we cannot help, as we look down on the precipitous crags of the corrie, with Glen Lui Beg and the stream winding its way through it beneath us, and hills of all sizes and forms stretching away everywhere around us till they are lost in the far distance, praising His name whose glory everything which we behold so forcibly proclaims, and whose mighty works are everywhere seen standing in solitary grandeur as they came from his creating hand, unmingled with and untarnished by the puny works of man, the greatest of which would have sunk into utter insignificance. We have but little time, however, for lengthened meditations, as it is now half-past twelve o'clock; so, tumbling one of the large blocks down the precipice, that we may hear it crashing like thunder amongst the rocks, and feel the sulphurous smell which ascends as it strikes upon them, we take our departure. Proceeding westward for a short way, amongst rocks and boulders of large size, some of which are piled as it were upon one another, like huge walls of masonry erected by giant hands as habitations for the mythic race of Titans (and which are even more frequent and characteristic on some other parts of the mountain), the path conducts us nearly due north for a mile, until we reach the walls of a building erected several years ago by the men of the Ordnance Survey. In this portion of the journey, the surface of the mountain is bare and sterile to a very remarkable extent. Nothing is to be seen but rounded granite boulders, upon which scarcely even a lichen grows, and patches of granite detritus, amongst which a very poor vegetation indeed is to be found. *Luzula arcuata*, forming an occasional scanty sward, along with *Festuca vivipara*; *Silene acaulis* in large, dense, rounded patches; *Juncus trifidus* and *Carex rigida* here and there in small tufts; *Salix herbacea*, very stunted, and with far more of the stem beneath than above the ground; the Alpine form of *Armeria maritima*, the only plant known to the un-

scientific, with a few blackish mosses and lichens unpleasant to the eye, are the sum total of this alt-Alpine flora. A hare crossing from one end of the mountain to another—a ptarmigan, evidently upon the same business—a few beetles, small spiders, and flies, are the sole representatives of animal life to be met with in this inhospitable region. Amongst the detritus, where the quartz is more abundant, and which the melting snows have channelled, a few small pieces of Cairngorm stones may be picked up, but of no great beauty nor value. From the ruined hut, the cairn on the summit of the mountain is seen; and thither we bend our steps over large granite slabs, upon which, in many places, we can walk as on a pavement, although requiring to take pretty long strides, and look well to our feet.

In a few minutes we reach the top, and stand at a greater elevation than we can elsewhere do in Great Britain save only on Ben Nevis, which is 100 feet higher. A glorious prospect meets our eye wherever it is turned; but it varies much, according to the state of the atmosphere, not merely in distinctness but also in extent. Hence it is only on rare occasions that it is seen in all its magnificence—generally, perhaps, but on two or three days in the year. The month of September is the best time, as on other mountains, especially in the morning, after a fall of rain on the previous day to purify the air. Earlier in the season, except on an occasional day, there is always a haze, created by the heat, lingering about the more distant mountains, and intercepting the view of what lies beyond. Generally, however, in a clear summer or autumn day, the whole of the Scottish Highlands are distinctly visible—mountain rising above mountain on every side, and towering to the skies till the eye can no longer distinguish them from the clouds, and even the telescope fails to trace their outline. And although I have seen it clearer in the far distance than it now is, we shall nevertheless have a capital view, as if

the panorama of the whole Scottish mountains were passing before our sight. As it is a physical impossibility to take all the surrounding scenery in at once, let us seat ourselves on the lower terrace of the cairn, and take it in piece by piece with the telescope which we have borrowed from one of the keepers, and which is a first-rate instrument. Looking first due north, we can distinguish the waters of the Moray Firth westward from the Bin of Cullen, and see, perhaps, a vessel or two sailing along, homeward or outward bound from or to the Northern Ocean. With a sweep of the glass to the north-west, Ben Wyvis, in Ross-shire, looms before us like a dim cloud; and, unless we are deceived, some of the heights in Sutherland are visible at its sides, though still more faintly. Turning to the east, the view is more limited, in consequence of Ben-na-board—only 300 feet lower than ourselves—raising its broad back in the way, and preventing us from seeing the German Ocean, which otherwise we should have done, in the neighbourhood of Aberdeen. On the north-east, Bennachie, near Inverury, is most conspicuous of the more distant hills, and will be most likely to attract the attention of Aberdonians, to all of whom it is well known by name, if not by sight, while to the general tourist none of the other heights which are visible beyond it possess any interest whatever. But now let us on to the opposite side of the Cairn, and let us see what we there behold. The whole range of the Grampians is now before us, stretching from south-east to south-west, and sending out branches in all directions over the shires of Forfar, Perth, and the mainland of Argyle, in one unbroken mass of gigantic hills—Pelion heaped upon Ossa, and Olympus upon them both, with its summit lost in the heavens—presenting so many different peaks running into one another, and fading so gradually away into the sky that it is almost impossible to single out and name individual mountains. Enough to say that the higher summits of

the range in the four counties through which they extend are, for the most part, more or less distinctly visible from the neighbourhood of the German to that of the Atlantic Ocean. To the west, then, we turn our eyes and the telescope to see what we can there discover. The vista is bounded by the loftier peaks of the northern division of Argyleshire, and the southern portion of Inverness, with apparently some of the mountains of Skye discernible where the waves of the Atlantic and the clouds of heaven meet. Coming nearer, and looking through the opening betwixt Cairntoul and the sharp ridge of Braeriach, we will have no difficulty in detecting and recognising, by its height amongst the waste of hills, Ben Nevis, the monarch of British mountains. It is almost with a grudge that we allow him the pre-eminence; and had the men of the Braes of Mar the power, they would willingly hurl him from his throne, and replace thereon the mountain on which we stand, which was long supposed to be the rightful sovereign, and whose claims were only recently settled by judge and jury to be invalid. Still, however, there is some comfort left, and the dark cloud of disappointment which seemed to settle down in the Cairngorm range has a silvery lining. Though, in consequence of the Ordnance Survey, we have been deprived of the monarch of British hills, and Mr Keith Johnston, by the public announcement thereof, has nearly put our guides into deep mourning at the loss, still we retain the queen and several other members of the illustrious family of our native mountains. Ben Nevis may be the king, but evidently there is something radically wrong about him when he resides at such a great distance from his royal consort and children. No wonder that a gloomy look is so often seen on his rugged brow, and that the big tears flowing down in streams have so deeply scarred his face when he beholds afar off across the waste of hills those from whom he has been divorced by a sentence more potent

and lasting than ever issued from the court in which Sir Justice Cresswell presides, and whom he can never more embrace till they are again united, by that subterranean fire which has caused the separation, on the day when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth itself be burned up.

So much for the more distant prospect to be obtained from Ben Macdhui: let us now come nearer home, for we have splendid sights close at hand. The loftiest range of mountains in the kingdom are around us—Cairngorm, Ben Bynach, Ben Main, Ben-na-board, Ben Votran, Cairntoul, and Braeriach, all of them but slightly lower than that upon which we stand, with summits bare and rugged, with sides deeply furrowed by the winter torrents, with their crevices filled with large wreaths of snow—presenting an array of giant hills which nowhere else is equalled in Scotland within a similar area. But, of them all, our eye lingers longest upon Cairntoul, which is undoubtedly the noblest looking of the mountains in Braemar, and differs from all the others in its summit being peaked. Taken in connection with the nearest ridge of Braeriach, and viewed from the western extremity of the mountain, where its whole outline from the base is distinctly visible, it presents a picture of sublimity which probably nowhere else we could look upon nearer than the Alps—to some of which, before the snow has disappeared from its summit, it bears a great resemblance. Its corries, the largest of which is visible before us, with the small circular loch of Uaine in its bosom, form the richest botanising ground in the district for Alpine plants; and were we to spend a night upon the hills, and commence our search early in the morning, we would find that before sunset we had collected a rich harvest indeed—a richer, probably, than any catalogue of their flora yet contains. But do not yet turn away your eyes, for we have another sight to witness, which, to an Aberdonian at least, we

can well believe to be the most interesting of all. Do you see yonder burn gushing down from the steep brow of Braeriach, and appearing from this distance as little more than an aggregation of silver threads slightly waving in the breeze. That is the *Garrachory*, which, geographically speaking, forms the main stream of the Dee, having its origin nearly two miles farther along the summit of the mountain, at an elevation of 4000 feet, in a few small springs of the purest and coldest water, welling up from its lowest depths, and percolating through the clearest granite detritus at the bidding of Him "who watereth the hills from his chambers, and sendeth the springs into the valleys to give drink to every beast of the field." It is, however, too far away for us to visit the springs just now and taste the limpid water—a single drop of which never reaches Aberdeen, although it well deserves a special journey, and would be something to boast of amongst the inhabitants of the granite city. The fall, from the black frowning precipice before us to the bottom of the corrie, is upwards of 1000 feet; and from its junction with the stream from Loch Uaine, there is an additional fall of about the same height to the base of the mountain. From this distance we can have no idea of the steep and rugged nature of the ravine down which it rushes, nor appreciate the full majesty of

"The grisly rocks that guard
The infant rills of Highland Dee."

But, as is generally the case in regard to the source of every river, from the majestic Nile down to the humble Dee, there is another stream which disputes with the one before us the post of honour. This is one which apparently has its origin in a large circular well, connected with several smaller pools, and surrounded with a rampart of boulders, in the hollow of Larig, between Braeriach and Ben Macdhui, a short distance farther on from the spot where we stand. Popularly speaking, this

and the adjacent pools are the *Wells of Dee* and the origin of the river ; and if the stream which issues therefrom be, as it evidently is, but the reappearance of another from Ben Macdhui, which is lost a little farther up the glen amongst the huge and crowded blocks, the *Larig* has good claims to be also geographically considered as such. Certain it is that in this case it is about as long as the other, and contains an equal volume of water, and I see no reason why the source of the Dee is not to be sought for in the springs north-east from the cairn of the highest mountain in the district. By proceeding north-west, over the boulders to the brow of Ben Macdhui, we would get a glimpse of the wells far down beneath us, and by selecting a suitable place might descend into the wild and desolate glen. But at present we shall not take time, as the afternoon is far advanced, and we have a long road before us homewards without this fatiguing detour. Turning, then, our eyes to the openings betwixt Braeriach and Cairngorm, and betwixt the latter mountain and Ben Main, we get fine views of portions of upper Strathspey, clothed with fir woods, and dotted with green fields and farmhouses, enlivening and contrasting well with the neighbouring mountain wilderness, and bathed in the mellowed light of the autumn sun, who is now hastening on apace to cheer with his glorious beams the lands beyond the Atlantic wave. And now let us take a farewell look at the whole of the surrounding scenery, for it is time that we were departing and bending our steps to Castleton. In silence we gaze and meditate, for we feel that a sacred spell is upon us which it would be a crime to break. Everywhere we seem to hear a voice proclaiming, "There is a God," in tones unto which we cannot close our ears ; everywhere we clearly see the unmistakable traces of the creative power of Him who is from everlasting to everlasting—even before the mountains had been brought forth from the wastes of chaos. As we look around us, we cannot but feel as we never did

before, the force of the apostle's declaration in reference to the natural religion, "that the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead."

There are two routes by which we could return from the mountain to Glen Lui—the one through Glen Dee, and the other through Glen Lui Beg, on both of which there is a kind of path. As, however, we would require to scramble over immense tracts of large boulders, amongst which we would come but little progress, to get to these glens, we shall return the way we came, which is undoubtedly the easiest, and, in the end, the shortest, of the three. We leave the cairn and descend the mountain as quickly as possible till we again reach Loch Etagan—the waters of which, now that the sun is behind the ridge, are black and gloomy indeed. Resting for a few minutes by its banks, we descend the steep slope of Corrie Etagan, and again proceed over the heath and through the bogs till we reach the Derry. We cross the stream and regain the track through the glen; and, scarcely taking time to look around us, pursue our way till we reach the bridge, where we once more rest for a moment. Entering the dark and sombre wood, where, from the power of sympathy with inanimate nature, our feelings insensibly glide into unison with the gloomy and spectral trees, we at length reach the keeper's house where we left our machine. Drinking a cup of tea to refresh us, we mount and drive rapidly down Glen Lui, through the forest of Mar, and over the stream of the Quoich, till we come to the ford at Allamore. Crossing, we are in the wood of Morrone, and shortly after enter the village, and leave the machine at the inn where it was hired. After all, we are not so wearied in body as we should have expected from our long fatiguing excursion, and we feel as if we could still walk a few additional miles if necessary; but our mind has

had its fill of the wild and sublime in nature, and seems as if it would now require a rest to invigorate its faculties which have been so active during the day. So, taking some slight refreshment, we speedily go off to bed, leaving all further conversation upon what we have seen till the morrow, but confessing, as we bid each other good-night, that the district is, indeed, without any exaggeration,

“The land of the mountain and flood,
Where the pine of the forest for ages hath stood ;
Where the eagle comes forth on the wings of the storm,
And her young ones are rocked on the high Cairngorm.”

CONCLUSION.

SUCH, then, is a brief account of the topography and natural history of Braemar. Ample material could easily have been found to extend our treatise to a much greater length, had this been at all desirable. But from what has been said, it will at once be seen that, both to the passing tourist and the rambling naturalist, the district possesses much that is interesting, and much that will well repay a visit. To guide the one to the sights most worthy of his notice, and the other to the places where he may find the richest treasures, as well as to give the fireside reader who has never seen and never may see Braemar, some idea of its characteristic features, has been our object. If we have succeeded in doing so, our labour shall certainly not have been in vain.

Kind reader, we have wandered together amongst its lofty mountains and its narrow glens, by the sides of its clear and rapid streams and into the depths of its sombre forests, across its bleak moorlands and round its dark lochs, noting their physical features and surrounding scenery. We have passed through its villages and hamlets, and marked their fine situation, their objects of interest, and the character of their population; and we have gazed upon its noble palace and beautiful mansions, where royalty and nobility find a short but pleasant relief from the cares and routine of a court. We have seen its more characteristic forms of animal and vegetable life, and examined its component rocks and their constituent minerals, finding much that was interesting and much that was rare to attract our notice and claim our study.

And now, before we part, we ask, what think you of this Highland region? Is it not well worthy indeed of a visit?

Come then, thou wandering tourist, and take up thine abode for a week therein, and if thou art a little of a naturalist also, thou wilt find much that will more than repay thee for many a long fatiguing walk, and gladden thine eye and heart even when thy limbs and feet are weary. Come, too, thou sedentary dweller in the city, whatever be thy profession and employment, whom biliousness and gout have not so broken down but that thou art able for a scramble amongst the crags, whose better feelings have not been so blunted with the pursuit of mammon but that thou canst still appreciate the sublime in nature, and thy physical powers will be much invigorated by a month's residence amidst its bracing breezes and picturesque scenery. And come thou, also, of the care-worn mind, who canst find no peace amidst the strife and turmoil of a restless weary world, and as thou gazest upon the woods clothed in nature's own holiday livery, and the fields ripening into the harvest beneath the soft beams of the autumn sun, while above thee the air is vocal with the songs of happy birds, and beneath thee the water makes music with its own melodious ripplings, thou shalt find a restorative more effectual in its operation and lasting in its results than any of those contained in all the pharmacopœias of medicine, and in all the prescriptions of apothecaries. But don't come thou who art a martyr to toothache, for the damp penetrating mists which often come down from the hills will only keep thee in distraction by night and by day, and send thee back to the Lowlands minus some of thy grinders; nor thou upon whose thin pale cheek consumption has painted her dark red spot, for its air is too strong and chilling for thee, and instead of checking the fell disease, will but speed thee onwards to the valley of the shadow of death. Don't come thou who hast but a

scanty supply of coin in thy purse, for its lodgings are too dear and its provisions too high for thee to make aught but the shortest stay, and consequently to go away dissatisfied with what thou hast not had the means of seeing, and give an evil report of the district to those whose circumstances would enable them to enjoy it more.

But come every lover of nature who art able to climb the hills and leap the streams, and if thou derivest as much pleasure in traversing the district as I have done, thou wilt not regret thy visit. To myself, at least, these rambles have indeed been very pleasant. The prosecution of my task amidst scenery which is always grand, alike in sunshine and storm, in rain and snow, was indeed a labour of love; and my musings as I climbed the lofty precipices, or followed the winding brooks, listening to the combined music of sighing breezes and murmuring waters, were verily of high and holy themes, lifting my thoughts upwards and onwards to the time when I hope to tread the everlasting hills of the New Jerusalem, and wander by the side of the river which flows from the throne of God, and gaze upon unfading beauty, and listen to unbroken melody in the Paradise above.

Kind reader, may it be so with thee. Farewell!

TABLE OF ALTITUDES IN BRAEMAR.

	Feet above sea-level.
Ballater village,	800
Balmoral Castle,	870
Invercauld bridge,	1060
Allan-quoich farm,	1100
Castleton village,	1180
Corrymulzie cottage,	1250
Dee at junction with Geaully,	1289
Altguisach cottage,	1380
Craig Coinnoch hill,	1390
Craigandarroch hill,	1400
Tomantoul farm, Morrone,	1500
Dee at junction with Giusachan,	1635
Junction of Garrachory and Larig,	1980
Coial hills, Glen Muic,	2160
Loch Kandor, Glen Callater,	2235
Craig Valloch, or Mar's Hill,	2430
Lochanean of Lochnagar,	2500
Cairn Drochit hill,	2689
Morrone hill at Castleton,	2790
Culardach hill, Glengairn,	2800
Morven hill, near Ballater,	2900
Loch Etagan, Ben Macdhui,	2946
Cairnwall mountain, Glen Cluny,	3116
Lochan Uaine of Cairntoul,	3200
Cairn Ealer, borders of Perthshire,	3340
Glasmeal mountain, Glen Cluny,	3502
Cairn Taggart, near Lochnagar,	3560
Ben Votran, Glen Dee,	3750
Lochnagar,	3789
Lesser Cairngorm, Glen Derry,	3800
Ben Aun, Cairngorm range,	3826
Ben-na-board,	3851
Highest well of Dee,	4000
Greater Cairngorm, on borders of Banff,	4090
Cairntoul, Glen Dee,	4200
Braeriach, Glen Larig,	4225
Ben Macdhui,	4200

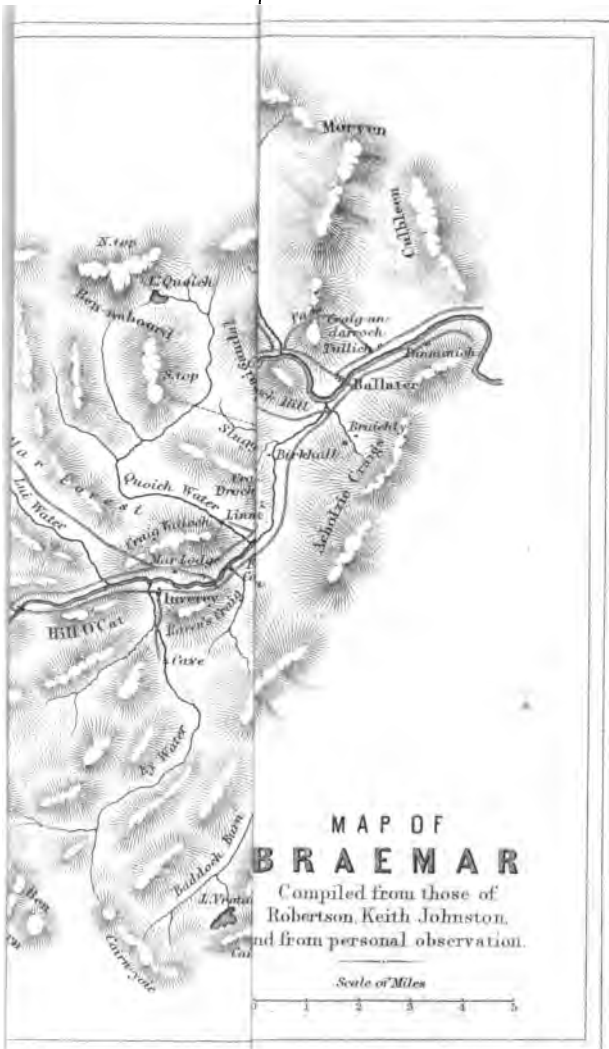
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THE END.



MAP OF
BRAEMAR

Compiled from those of
 Robertson, Keith Johnston,
 and from personal observation.

Scale of Miles







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